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DRAGON™

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DRAGON™

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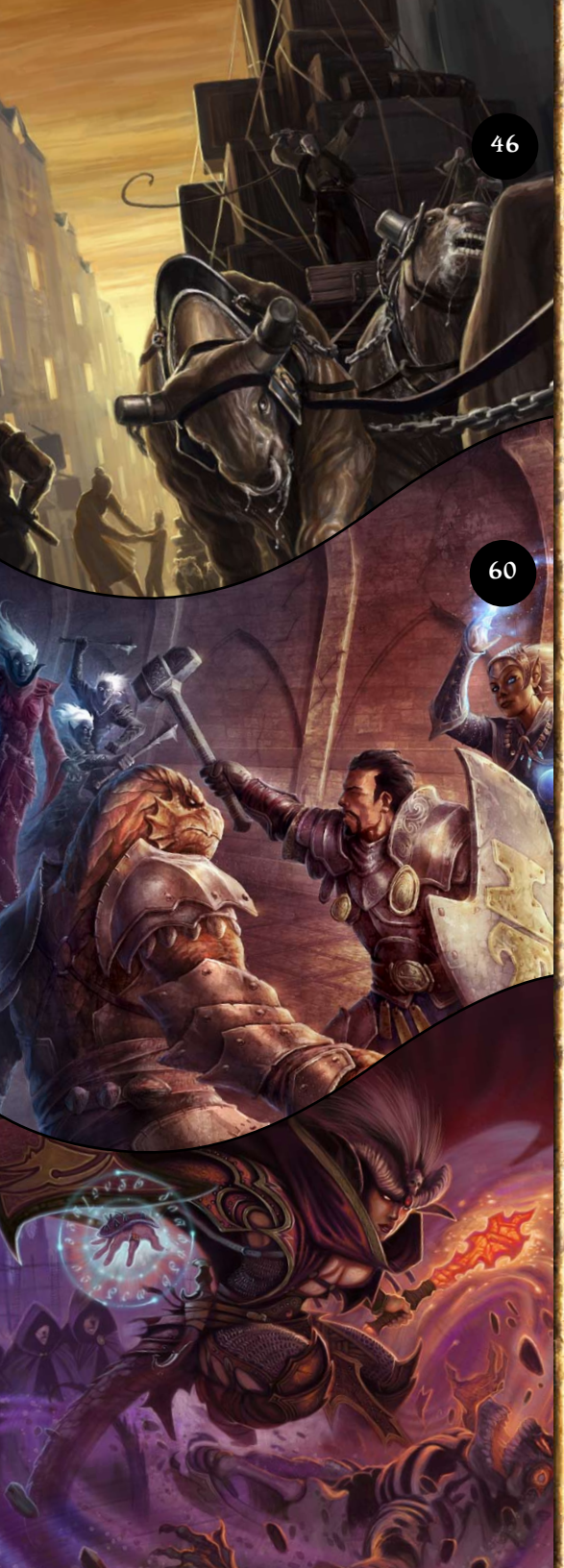

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Illustration by Steve Prescott

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Build Them and Games will Come

If you don't visit the D&D site except to read these awesome editorials, you might have missed a big moment for *D&D Insider* last week. We launched the *Character Builder* last Monday, January 26. This is the full version for characters of levels 1–30, provided you're a subscriber.

So there it is. I already transferred all my regular character data for one campaign to the *CB*, and I'll do the same for my second character in a couple months when *Player's Handbook 2* is out. You know, because I'm playing a shaman, which you can preview by clicking here.

While I was making my character the other night, I started to get a familiar itch—and not one you can solve with medication. No, this was the character creation itch. I like to build D&D characters. The *Character Builder* makes doing this easier, but when you're done with all these characters, you're still limited by the number of games you're playing. And that brings me to my main point this month.

I've talked in past editorials about giving DMing a try. But I want to give you the encouragement again. I used to be a confirmed player. I didn't have an interest in running a game, unless doing so was the only way I could play. Even then, I was constantly looking for someone to pass the reins to. It wasn't until 3rd Edition that I became genuinely interested in running a long-term game. But even then, I did it more out of a sense of responsibility to my job and less because I felt like it was fun. I played in two other campaigns, and loved it. But DMing? It never felt like it was for me.

That's changed now. As we've said elsewhere, DMing 4th Edition is easier than in any other edition of D&D. We do more of the work for you than ever before, and monsters and encounters are sweetly simple to adjudicate. Plus, the system gives you unprecedented freedom to make changes and decisions that suit your game—you're enabled, not constrained. Heck, one of our regular columnists, Shelly Mazzanoble, just ran the game for her parents recently (they'd never even cracked open a rulebook), and it was only the second game she'd ever run.

So what's this to do with the *Character Builder*? Well now that you've got all these spare characters sitting around, make a deal with your group that you should all start taking turns behind the screen. If you volunteer to take first alternate DMing shift, you can coax another player into following behind you. If you want to keep it really simple, grab a copy of *Dungeon Delve* in a few weeks to get started, and just run a few delve sessions. Get enough rotating DMs in, and before you know it, those characters won't just be gathering dust. There's just no better way to play more than to run more.

What's been your favorite aspect of the *Character Builder* so far? I'm partial to not having to do any math, but I also enjoyed being able to add custom elements to my character throughout the process. So what about you? And what was the first character you built? Send us your class, race, and level to dndinsider@wizards.com. We'd love to hear from you!

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Playing Shadar-Kai

by Chris Sims

illustrations by Steve Prescott, Chris Seaman & John Stanko

Cold of heart and dark of eye, passion burns still within these people of shadow and deep winter.

Racial Traits

Average Height: 5'7"-6'
Average Weight: 110-170 lb.

Ability Scores: +2 Dexterity, +2 Intelligence
Size: Medium
Speed: 6 squares
Vision: Low-light

Languages: Common, choice of one other
Skill Bonuses: +2 Acrobatics, +2 Stealth
Shadow Origin: Your ancestors were native to the Shadowfell, so you are considered a shadow creature for the purpose of effects that relate to creature origin.
Winterkin: Due to your connection to the Raven Queen, you gain a +1 racial bonus to your Fortitude defense. You also gain a +2 racial bonus to death saving throws and saving throws against the unconscious condition.
Shadow Jaunt: You can use *shadow jaunt* as an encounter power.

Shadow Jaunt Shadar-kai Racial Power

You move like a wraith between two points, your body re-materializing slowly after you arrive at your destination.

Encounter ✦ Teleportation
Move Action **Personal**

Effect: You teleport 3 squares and become insubstantial until the start of your next turn.

Long eons in the Shadowfell have shaped the shadar-kai into a fiery and, some say, cruel people. Fighting the apathy pervasive in their home plane, shadar-kai live passionately and fearlessly, if grimly. They see themselves as instruments of death and dissolution, the bringers of the righteous end to complacency, stagnation, and life itself. Theirs is a harsh society of self-interest. Among shadar-kai, the strong of body and mind excel and create legends. The weak molder to dust, passing into eternity unremembered.

Play a shadar-kai if you want . . .

✦ to use your shadow origins to enhance your abilities with dark powers.

✦ to be part of a culture that values great deeds and great power.

✦ to be a member of a race that favors the avenger, bard, fighter, invoker, ranger, rogue, sorcerer, warlord, and wizard classes.

Physical Qualities

Shadar-kai are humanlike, but the weight of existence in the Shadowfell has shaped them to be slightly shorter and much thinner than their human counterparts. A shadar-kai has a colorless complexion that varies from alabaster to dark gray. Shadar-kai hair is similarly drab or raven black. Pale hair might have a hint of color within the range of human norms. The eyes are lustrous and black, lacking any white or clear pupil. Shadows near a shadar-kai sometimes seem to reach out or deepen, especially when the shadar-kai is angry.

Although drab in natural appearance, shadar-kai are quite elaborate and idiosyncratic in personal adornment. They like dark and exotic clothing, jewelry, and weapons, often decorated with swatches of bright color. Hair is similarly ornate and often dyed. All shadar-kai embellish their skin with tattoos, scars, and piercings.

A shadar-kai could live longer than any eladrin. Few do, however; the consequences of extreme living keep them from seeing old age. Some simply fade away, disappearing into shadow and death, perhaps leaving behind a wraith as the soul passes into the Raven Queen's care.

Playing a Shadar-Kai

The Shadowfell saps living creatures of creativity and the will to live. When shadar-kai moved to the Shadowfell ages ago, they were not immune to this depression. Numerous members of their early society gave in to ennui and simply slipped out of existence, driving the shadar-kai to change their lifestyle, embracing strong emotions and peak experiences. These practices, born out of necessity, became traditions over countless generations.

The current culture of the shadar-kai is a study in pushing boundaries. Shadar-kai welcome difficult tasks, as well as physical and emotional extremes, as a way of life. They learn to channel the darkness of the Shadowfell rather than allowing that darkness to consume them. And they accept death as the inevitable end for those who fail to attain the right amount of power or fame.

Shadar-kai embrace living with gusto. The limits of pleasure and pain distract them from the wearying melancholy of the Shadowfell. They also strive for personal greatness, so that if they fail to gain the actual ability to live forever, stories of their great deeds will grant a sort of immortality. In this search for personal glory, most shadar-kai ignore banalities such as comfort, morality, and safety.

The tattoos, scars, and piercings a shadar-kai wears have more than one purpose. They exist as a testament to the wearer's ability to withstand pain as well as a means of personal expression and decoration. Each decoration can also be a record of a deed done, an honor gained, or a misdeed declared.

These records are important, because personal merit is all a shadar-kai really has. Other signs of personal worth, such as wealth, are but manifestations of success—side effects. Money, for example, can be gained by chance. What matters is an affluent shadar-kai's ability to protect his or her holdings and the ability to gain more.

Although shadar-kai leave the Shadowfell to seek fortune in the world and among the planes, a few needs and wants drive a shadar-kai to return home from time to time. Most shadar-kai feel a basic need to visit the enveloping dimness of the Shadowfell at least intermittently. The plane is unlike even the darkest reaches of other planes. Obtaining new adornments and equipment in the proper style often requires a return to the Shadowfell. Shadar-kai also return to their gloomy settlements to spend time among those who see extreme, weird, or even deviant as normal. And they come home to brag.

As a rule, shadar-kai are far from humble about their abilities and accomplishments. Boasting and

bravado, called "crowing" among shadar-kai, are common in shadar-kai gathering places. Shadar-kai crow in battle, talking up their successes and speaking doom to their enemies. During birthdays and other celebrations, shadar-kai have what they call "crowing moots," where boasting is taken to the level of artistic and poetic ritual. In addition to the verbal jousting, moots often include, or degenerate into, physical competitions and duels among the participants. As with other deeds among shadar-kai, the greatest "crower" of a moot gains a token—a physical representation such as a tattoo—to commemorate his or her victory. A few shadar-kai, known as doomspeakers, take this "crowing" custom to a supernatural level, becoming so adept at malediction that they can demoralize and sting their foes with dark threats and bloody predictions.

Truth be known, shadar-kai don't care if their bravado ultimately proves false. Despite their origin, they have no fear of defeat or agonizing death. What they truly dread is to live without having experienced life, fading into nothingness and being forgotten. Death in battle or even execution for a crime is a statement of a life lived. After all, shadar-kai are death's children.

The Raven Queen is a fair mother, if not a loving one. When the shadar-kai called upon her in ancient times, she answered. She still does. While she spares little love, she also never demands the love of her children. Almost all shadar-kai revere the Raven Queen, but each shadar-kai is free to choose his or her destiny and way of life, including religion.

Shadar-kai Characteristics: Ambitious, bloodthirsty, detached, excessive, grim, intrepid, rash, ruthless, sinister, thrill-seeking, unconventional, violent, zealous

Male Names: Albrek, Baden, Codren, Emul, Horiam, Hutahn, Ioan, Lucyan, Mahahn, Niku, Ovid, Petru, Razvahn, Serbahn, Shathys, Teodahr, Vasylay, Zahar

Female Names: Afyn, Anka, Bahnka, Codruta, Doru, Dyon, Floahr, Ghita, Helayna, Ioana, Jenit, Katryn, Lucya, Markella, Nadya, Roduka, Sahyeh, Tabita, Yalda, Zyna

Shadar-kai Religion

Shadar-kai revere the commandments of the Raven Queen as societal traditions, and they have great places of worship for their favored deity. However, shadar-kai are far from monotheistic. They worship and respect numerous deities, usually among the unaligned gods. Warriors revere Kord, whose edicts of bravery and strength are wholly compatible with those of the Raven Queen. Magicians pay homage to Corellon, seeking macabre beauty and perfection in magic, and Ioun, for a philosophy of mental excellence. Sehanine has a special place in shadar-kai hearts for her teachings of following one's own destiny, keeping to the shadows, and seeking new experiences. The shadar-kai have a thriving, if anarchic civilization, and its rulers, planners, and citizens pay homage to Erathis. Shadar-kai propitiate Melora for protection in the wilderness and success in the hunt.

Few shadar-kai openly worship extreme deities, good or evil. That said, far more evil gods appeal to the typical shadar-kai mindset than good ones. Authority figures among the shadar-kai rarely outlaw any form of deity worship. For that reason, shadar-kai society might be one of the few that actually allows true religious freedom with regard to the gods. Those who worship evil gods must still do so with care, lest their shrines fall to audacious shadar-kai hoping to prove their mettle. Demon worship, especially that of Orcus and his ilk, finds little tolerance even among the permissive shadar-kai.

Shadar-Kai Adventurers

Two sample shadar-kai adventurers are described below.

Boyahn is a shadar-kai avenger trained in Pelor's ways in a secret shrine in the city of Gloomwrought. Following Pelor is a form of rebellion against the traditions of his people. The sun is dim in the Shadowfell, and even the nonjudgmental shadar-kai find "sun worship" weird. But Boyahn embraces his "deviance" from shadar-kai norms as an ultimate expression of his individuality. Extreme in his asceticism, he eschews much of the negative sensuality that is part of his culture. He has not lost the ambition most shadar-kai carry in their hearts, however. Although he respects the Raven Queen, and his worship of Pelor is tolerated among shadar-kai, Boyahn plans to lead many of his people to Pelor and to broader connections with the world. His first goal is to become recognized as a capable hero by excising evil where he finds it, particularly evils even shadar-kai despise. To do so, he knows he must go into the world and find likeminded companions. Once he has secured a solid reputation, his example should be enough to make other shadar-kai turn to Pelor. Boyahn intends to encourage this and form a movement of light among his people. Whether the authorities that favor the Raven Queen will oppose his goals remains to be seen. They might prove less aloof than their goddess—unless Boyahn can prove himself a fitting agent of death despite his service to Pelor.

Myruna is a shadar-kai warlord whose home region borders the worldly Underdark through thin Shadowfell barriers in nearby canyons. Dwarf settlements beyond those barriers are accustomed to shadar-kai traders and travelers, so Myruna decided to broaden her horizons in the world. She won some acclaim and wealth by protecting dwarf miners in the deeps, where she learned quickly how doughty the dwarves are as warriors. While celebrating victory among her new friends, Myruna found herself conversing with Hrunik, a dwarf mercenary fighter. His stories of the wealth and glory to be won by axe, spell, and courage stirred Myruna's typical shadar-kai drive to acquire power and glory. Hrunik, in turn, was impressed with her tactical knowledge and brashness. He invited her to join his band of mercenary comrades as their tactical leader. Her willingness to lead from the front and put herself at great risk for the success of the group has won respect. With her allies, she hopes to accomplish deeds worth crowing about when she returns home.

Racial Feats

Shadar-kai have a number of feats all their own, as well as access to those tied to their Shadowfell origin.

Heroic Tier Feats

These feats are available to any shadar-kai character who meets the prerequisites.

Benighted Birthright

Prerequisite: Shadar-kai

Benefit: You gain resist 5 necrotic and a +2 feat bonus to saving throws against ongoing necrotic damage.

Blighting Power

Prerequisite: Shadar-kai; bard, sorcerer, swordmage, warlock, or wizard class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following attack powers you know.

Booming Blade (*swordmage*, see *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*, page 27): If the target starts its turn adjacent to you and moves away, the damage dealt is necrotic and thunder damage. This power gains the Necrotic keyword.

Dragonfrost (*sorcerer*, see *Player's Handbook 2*, page 139): If you hit with this power, the damage dealt is cold and necrotic. This power gains the Necrotic keyword.

Hellish Rebuke (*warlock*, see *Player's Handbook*, page 132): If you hit with this power, the damage dealt is fire and necrotic. This power gains the Necrotic keyword.

Ray of Frost (*wizard*, see *Player's Handbook*, page 159): If you hit with this power, the damage dealt is cold and necrotic. This power gains the Necrotic keyword.

Vicious Mockery (*bard*, see *Player's Handbook 2*, page 69): If you hit with this power, the damage dealt is psychic and necrotic. This power gains the Necrotic keyword.

Bloodthirsty Hunter

Prerequisite: Shadar-kai, ranger class, Hunter's Quarry class feature

Benefit: If you reduce your quarry to 0 hit points, you can immediately choose a new quarry as a free action. If you hit the new quarry before the start of your next turn, you can apply your Hunter's Quarry damage even if you already used it this round.

Darkwinter Wild Soul

Prerequisites: shadar-kai, sorcerer class, Wild Magic spell source

Benefit: You can choose to resist cold or necrotic damage instead of rolling a d10 for your Wild Soul class feature.

Deathward Aegis

Prerequisite: shadar-kai, swordmage, Aegis of Shielding class feature

Benefit: When you reduce damage with your Aegis of Shielding class feature, the same target also gains resist necrotic 5 until the end of its next turn. Increase this resistance to resist necrotic 10 at 11th level, and again to resist necrotic 15 at 21st level.

Deathly Disruption

Prerequisite: shadar-kai

Benefit: Your attacks ignore the first 5 points of necrotic resistance. This increases to 10 points at 11th level, and again to 15 points at 21st level.

Devious Jaunt

Prerequisites: Int 13, shadar-kai, *shadow jaunt* racial power

Benefit: You can add your Intelligence modifier to the distance you teleport with *shadow jaunt*.

Expert Chainfighter

Prerequisite: Proficient in spiked chain, shadar-kai, any martial class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following exploits you possess.

Deft Strike (*rogue*, see *Player's Handbook*, page 118): You can use a spiked chain with this power. If you are wielding a spiked chain, you can move 2 squares before or after making the attack, and you can treat your Sneak Attack damage as necrotic damage for this attack.

Dual Strike (*fighter*, see *Martial Power*, page 7): If you are wielding a spiked chain, you can treat it as though you are wielding two melee weapons (the spiked chain is considered both your main hand and your off-hand weapon). You can shift 1 square before, between, or after the two attacks.

Brash Assault (*warlord*, see *Martial Power*, page 103): If your target hits you with the attack granted by this power and you are wielding a spiked chain, the target takes necrotic damage equal to your Strength modifier.

Twin Strike (*ranger*, see *Player's Handbook*, page 105): If you are wielding a spiked chain, you can treat it as though you are wielding two melee weapons (the spiked chain is considered both your main hand and your off-hand weapon). You can shift 1 square before, between, or after the two attacks.

Life on the Edge

Prerequisites: Shadar-kai

Benefit: Whenever you spend an action point while you are bloodied, you gain a +2 bonus to all rolls you make during the granted extra action.

Reaper's Touch

Prerequisites: Invoker, sorcerer, warlock, or wizard class

Benefit: You gain a benefit with any of the following attack powers you know.

Avenging Light (*invoker*, see *Player's Handbook 2*, page 103): This power gains a range of Melee touch in addition to its normal range. You can use it as a melee basic attack.

Acid Orb (*sorcerer*, see *Player's Handbook 2*, page 138): This power gains a range of Melee touch in addition to its normal range. You can use it as a melee basic attack.

Dragonfrost (*sorcerer*, see *Player's Handbook 2*, page 139): This power gains a range of Melee touch in addition to its normal range. You can use it as a melee basic attack.

Eldritch Blast (*warlock*, see *Player's Handbook*, page 132): This power gains a range of Melee touch in addition to its normal range. You can use it as a melee basic attack.

Magic Missile (*wizard*, see *Player's Handbook*, page 132): This power gains a range of Melee touch in addition to its normal range. You can use it as a melee basic attack.

Shadar-kai Beast

Prerequisites: Shadar-kai, *shadow jaunt* racial power, ranger, Beast Mastery class feature

Benefit: Your beast companion gains the shadow origin instead of the natural origin. It gains +2 to death saving throws and saving throws against the unconscious condition, as well as a +2 racial bonus to Stealth.

When you use your *shadow jaunt* racial power, you can teleport beast companion the same distance that you teleport. You choose which one of you is insubstantial at the end of the teleport.

Winter Favored

Prerequisite: shadar-kai

Benefit: You gain resist 5 cold and a +2 feat bonus to saving throws against ongoing cold damage.

Paragon Tier Feats

These feats are available to any shadar-kai character of 11th level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

Bravura Shroud

Prerequisites: 11th level, shadar-kai, warlord class, Bravura Presence class feature

Benefit: Whenever an ally chooses to benefit from your Bravura Presence class feature, that ally gains concealment until the end of its next turn.

Ghostly Rejuvenation

Prerequisites: 11th level, shadar-kai

Benefit: When you use a power with the Healing keyword on an ally, one target of that power can also become insubstantial until the end of its next turn.

Marked Jaunt

Prerequisites: 11th level, shadar-kai, fighter, Combat Challenge class feature

Benefit: If an enemy you have marked makes an attack that doesn't include you, you can use *shadow jaunt* as an immediate interrupt to teleport adjacent to that enemy and then make your Combat Challenge attack, as long as that enemy is within range of *shadow jaunt*.

Reactive Jaunt

Prerequisites: 11th level, shadar-kai, *shadow jaunt* racial power

Benefit: You can use *shadow jaunt* as an immediate reaction, triggered when an enemy damages you.

Sequestering Jaunt

Prerequisites: 11th level, shadar-kai, avenger class

Benefit: When you are adjacent to the target of your *oath of enmity* and you use your *shadow jaunt* power, you also teleport your *oath of enmity* target the same number of squares. Your *oath of enmity* target must end the teleport adjacent to you.

Shadowed Aegis

Prerequisite: shadar-kai, swordmage, Aegis of Assault class feature

Benefit: When you teleport due to your Aegis of Assault class feature, you also become insubstantial until the end of your next turn.

Epic Tier Feats

These feats are available to any shadar-kai character of 21st level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

Blade of the Raven Queen

Prerequisites: 21st level, shadar-kai, swordmage

Benefit: Your spells that deal cold damage instead deal cold and necrotic damage and gain the Necrotic keyword.

Deathless Warrior

Prerequisites: 21st level, Con 13, shadar-kai

Benefit: If a melee or a close attack would reduce you to 0 or fewer hit points, reduce the damage taken by 5 + your Constitution modifier.

Enmity's Dark Vigor

Prerequisites: 21st level, shadar-kai, avenger class

Benefit: When your *oath of enmity* target hits you, you gain temporary hit points equal to your Wisdom modifier.

Spirit Jaunt

Prerequisites: 21st level, shadar-kai, *shadow jaunt* racial power

Benefit: When you use *shadow jaunt*, you also gain phasing until the end of your next turn.

Spiked Chain Mastery

Shadar-kai have an affinity for wicked weapons such as the spiked chain. Some warriors gain extreme proficiency with the spiked chain. To do so, you must select the Spiked Chain Training weapon mastery feat (see below). The feat grants not only proficiency but also a special benefit. Moreover, it grants access to power-swap feats that provide exotic maneuvers and tactics. These exploits allow you to add more control to your array of martial attacks.

Since the weapon mastery training feats require a great deal of focused training, each one is a multiclass feat. Normal rules for selecting multiclass feats apply.

Spiked Chain Training [Multiclass]

Prerequisites: Dex 13

Benefit: You gain proficiency with the spiked chain. You can treat the spiked chain as a double weapon and a light blade. As a double weapon, the spiked chain deals 2d4/2d4 damage, and it gains the off-hand property. For more on double weapons, see *Adventurer's Vault*, page 10.

Spiked Chain Novice

Prerequisites: Spiked Chain Training, 4th level

Benefit: You can swap one 3rd-level or higher encounter attack power you know for the *chain trip* attack power.

Chain Trip **Feat Power**

You lash out with your chain and jerk your foe to the ground.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a spiked chain.
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 1[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, slide the target 2 squares and the target is knocked prone.
At 11th level, increase to 2[W] damage.
At 21st level, increase to 3[W] damage.

Spiked Chain Expert

Prerequisites: Spiked Chain Training, 8th level

Benefit: You can swap one 6th-level or higher utility power you know for the *chain ward* utility power.

Chain Ward **Feat Power**

You take a sidelong stance, whirling your chain above your head and watching your foes with sharp, opportunistic menace.

Daily ✦ Martial, Stance, Weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a spiked chain.
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You threaten all squares within your reach.

Spiked Chain Specialist

Prerequisites: Spiked Chain Training, 10th level

Benefit: You can swap one 9th-level or higher daily attack power you know for the *steel shackles* attack power.

Spiked Shackles **Feat Power**

With remarkable deftness, you wrap your foe in your chain, allowing you to squeeze the spike home and control your enemy's movement.

Daily ✦ Martial, Weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a spiked chain.
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 1[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and the target is grabbed. You can sustain the grab as long as the target is within your reach, and the target takes a –2 penalty to escape attempts.
At 15th level, increase to 2[W] damage.
At 25th level, increase to 3[W] damage.
Miss: Half damage, and the target is grabbed; you can sustain the grab as long as the target is within your reach.
Effect: Until the target is no longer grabbed, you can slide the target 1 square as a minor action. When you sustain the grab, the target takes 1[W] damage.

Shadar-Kai Origin

Shadar-kai were once humans, native to the world. They were all members of an extended tribe who called themselves Shadar-Kai. These early humans had seen the abuses Nerull, once god of death, perpetrated on the souls who passed into his power. They also feared the unknowable reaches of death into which most souls pass even now. When the Raven Queen slew Nerull and ascended to godhood, in an age now largely forgotten, the Shadar-Kai struck a deal with her. They promised to serve as her mortal agents, and in exchange, she gave them incredibly long life and freedom from frailty. The shadar-kai believe that, through their pact, they became the chosen people of death and winter.

The Shadar-Kai moved to the Shadowfell, setting up their communities on the borders of Letherna, the Raven Queen's domain. Life in shadow changed the humans, reshaping them and altering their appearance. Eventually, they were so different from humans that they became a distinct species. As they expanded their territory in the Shadowfell and began interacting again with the mortal world, the tribal name became the name for their race.

Through their pact with the Raven Queen, each shadar-kai is an instrument of death and fate. The Raven Queen doesn't demand worship from the shadar-kai, although she receives it in abundance. She demands only that they observe the pact by keeping her commandments regardless of other beliefs. So most shadar-kai hold no pity for the dying and try to punish those who defy fate. But shadar-kai also believe that nobody truly knows what fate holds.

Individual shadar-kai, therefore, seek to make the best of all possible fates. A shadar-kai lives in extreme ways not only to throw off the apathy of the Shadowfell but also to test fate and ensure that he or she has a great destiny. All shadar-kai hope for some sort of immortality, whether as a lasting legend, a sorrows-worn servant of the Raven Queen, or something else entirely. These beliefs lead shadar-kai to great deeds, and they work to weed out the unfit. As a result, the shadar-kai people are very active and successful across all of creation, expanding their influence on the fate of all.

Shadar-Kai in Your Campaign

Any campaign that has a place for death, shadow, and/or the Shadowfell also has a place for the shadar-kai. In the fantastic world of the Dungeons & Dragons® game, grim agents of death as a neutral force give players a lot to explore. The iconic shadar-kai chain-fighter or dual-katar-wielding warrior—perhaps a ranger, rogue, or fighter—is just the beginning of the possibilities. Shadar-kai embrace death and a warrior lifestyle, but they also respect individual expression and capabilities. As a people, they respect magic and its ability to augur where the threads of fate lead. Each shadar-kai is tied to the Raven Queen and her philosophies but is free to choose a path that might lead away from the gloom of the Shadowfell. As death-bringers and glory-seekers, shadar-kai are born to adventure.

If the shadar-kai presented here, as they are in the core D&D game, don't fit your world, numerous possibilities exist to allow players access to this fascinating race. One such alternative is that the shadar-kai are strange fey in service to the Winter Court of the Feywild. This angle takes the shadar-kai back to their roots in 3rd Edition's *Fiend Folio*. It also leaves the shadar-kai largely intact mechanically, with a connection to winter, death, and mercilessness. Instead, perhaps the shadar-kai are mortal folk who fought on the side of the Primordials in the Dawn War. With the defeat of the ancient elementals, the gods cursed the shadar-kai or the shadar-kai exiled themselves to shadow. Maybe the shadar-kai are simply natives of the Shadowfell, like the eladrin are to the Feywild. Even if no plane of shadow exists in your campaign, shadar-kai could arise from mortals who live near areas tainted by death energy. They could be cursed by some ill deed in the past and striving to undo their fate. A unique individual that is like a shadar-kai could arise from such situations, tainted by death or bearing a family curse related to darkness.

Paragon Paths

The following paragon paths play on shadar-kai tradition and culture.

Abiding Reaper

"You've evaded death long enough. Now it has found you."

Prerequisites: Shadar-kai

Regardless of your religious bent, the traditions of your people run strong in your veins. Those veins have spilled your own dark blood for fated deeds; and those deeds have, in turn, moved you along the road to fulfilling the dream almost every shadar-kai holds in mind and heart. The natural course of your life seems to be to fulfill your people's ancient pact against all those who stand in opposition to departing creation. Whether through your intentional strengthening of your shadar-kai nature or by happy chance, your body has grown strong in death. You are drawn to those who defy death and fate, especially creatures that have immortality—natural or otherwise. To such ones you deliver the sweet freedom of death, sending them into the arms they sought to avoid. Their resistance is for naught. You are a representative of the inevitable. In your terrifying strength you abide—perhaps one day in immortality justly granted, but certainly in legend.

Abiding Reaper Path Features

Deathly Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to make an attack, that attack ignores all resistances and insubstantial and shuts down the target's regeneration (if any) until the end of your next turn.

Blood Calling (11th level): Whenever you bloody a target, that target grants you combat advantage until it is no longer bloodied.

Hardened Spirit (16th level): Whenever a creature makes an attack against your Fortitude or Will and misses, you gain temporary hit points equal to 1/2 your level + your Constitution modifier.

Abiding Reaper Powers

When you choose the Abiding Reaper paragon path, you choose the ability score on which you base your melee attack and damage rolls. The chosen ability score should match that of your primary class, such as Strength for a fighter. When an Abiding Reaper power refers to a "chosen ability," use the ability score you chose and its modifier.

Reaping Disruption Abiding Reaper Attack 11

Through your strike, you disrupt the flow of your foe's life force, shattering its natural resilience.

Encounter ✦ Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Chosen ability vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3[W] + chosen ability modifier damage, and the target gains vulnerable 5 to all damage (save ends).

Fearsome Revival Abiding Reaper Utility 12

Just as your injuries overwhelm you, you hear the voice of the Raven Queen, and it vitalizes your soul. To the shock of your adversaries, you stand instantly, unleashing a vigorous shout.

Encounter
No Action **Personal**
Trigger: You fail a death save.
Effect: You reroll your death save with a +5 bonus. If this roll's result is 20 or higher, in addition to being able to spend a healing surge, you can also immediately stand (no action).

Reaper's Repast Abiding Reaper Attack 20

Your devastating strike channels some of your enemy's vitality into you.

Daily ✦ Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Chosen ability vs. Fortitude
Hit: 4[W] + chosen ability modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You can spend a healing surge.

Shadar-kai in Forgotten Realms

In the Forgotten Realms® campaign setting, shadar-kai began appearing in large numbers, born among human citizens of Shade a generation after the Netherese city returned from shadow to the world. They also exist as former humans from Shade who made their own way in shadow, independent of Netheril. In the wilds of Faerûn's Shadowfell and the worldly Underdark, shadar-kai have enclaves with a unique society unlike that of Netheril and more like that described here. Netherese shadar-kai tend to be much more sinister. Each of these instances serves as an example of the potential for the inclusion of shadar-kai in other campaign worlds.

Doomspeaker

"The end of your days is here, for the strongest enemy you have ever faced stands before you. Your doom lives within me.

Prerequisites: Shadar-kai

The crowing moot of the shadar-kai is your playground, where your myth is in the making. Your accomplishments are known among your peers and written indelibly on your body. Words have you woven before your equals and lessers, telling the story of what you have done and where you have gone. Ever have you emerged undefeated. Doubt you've rebuffed with proof, perhaps even a gory show of strength. In the face of your enemies, you speak of their last moments and your inevitable victory. Maybe you even learn all you can about your greatest foes, telling them how the twisted path of history has led them into your reach and, ultimately, to doom. You have mastered the art of crowing to the level of the mystical. Oaths and boasts you make carry with them the fearsome shadow of fate. Adversaries quail before your bold speech, and your allies know what you say is a promise, not a hope. You're proof that bragging isn't really bragging if what you say is true.

Doomspeaker Path Features

Rattling Action (11th level): Whenever you spend an action point to make an extra attack, the attack power you use is considered to have the Rattling keyword (see Doomspeaker Powers).

Fearmonger (11th level): Whenever you make an attack with a power that has the Rattling keyword, the target still suffers the Rattling effect even if your attack misses.

Thrive on Fear (16th level): When you use a power that has the Rattling keyword and reduce the target to 0 hit points, you can immediately spend a healing surge as a free action.

Doomspeaker Powers

The doomspeaker's powers make use of the following keyword, which appears in *Martial Power* and *Player's Handbook 2*.

Rattling: If you are trained in Intimidate and you deal damage with an attack that has this keyword, the target takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn. A creature immune to fear is not subject to this penalty.

Unnerving Boast Doomspeaker Attack 11

Your terrifying avowal echoes in the hollow and short future your enemies now expect as you come for them.

Encounter ✦ Psychic, Rattling
Free Action **Close** burst 3
Trigger: When you bloody a foe, or reduce a foe to 0 hp
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Charisma +4 vs. Will.
Special: Increase to Charisma +6 vs. Will at 21st level.
Hit: 2d10 + Charisma modifier psychic damage.

Quickened Coercion Doomspeaker Utility 12

With hateful glares, biting words, and bloody evidence, you quickly cow your foes and prove their inferiority.

Encounter ✦ Fear
Minor Action
Effect: You can make an Intimidate check against an enemy's Will defense. If you succeed, you gain combat advantage against that enemy until the end of your next turn.
Special: If you score a critical hit with any attack, you regain the use of this power.

Doomcaller's Promise Doomspeaker Attack 20

You bring your enemies to a standstill with your ritual boasting, giving you and your allies a window of opportunity.

Daily ✦ Psychic, Rattling
Free Action **Close** burst 5
Trigger: When you bloody a foe or reduce a foe to 0 hp
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Charisma +6 vs. Will.
Hit: 2d10 + Charisma modifier psychic damage, and the target is dazed and slowed (save ends both). Additionally, the targets suffer the effects of the Rattling keyword until the end of the encounter.
Miss: Half damage and the targets suffer the effects of the Rattling keyword until the end of the encounter.

Shadar-kai in Eberron

In the Eberron® campaign setting, shadar-kai are much the same as presented in this article. They were once human, and in their fear of death they made a ritual pact with the Traveler and moved to Dolurrh. Now they are grim inhabitants of the Shadowfell who fight against the apathy and gloom of that place by living frenzied, unpredictable lives. Most shadar-kai revere the Dark Six, favoring the Traveler and his doctrine of cunning, change, and deception. Although shadar-kai tend to be unaligned, many of them also venerate the Shadow, the Fury, and the Mockery—the latter of which gives shadar-kai their tradition of ritual tattooing, scarification, and body piercing as a way to combat fading into Dolurrh's shadows. A few shadar-kai also worship Balinor, for the hunt, and Dol Dorn, for prowess in war. From their settlements in the Shadowfell, shadar-kai venture to all corners of Eberron in search of experiences, wealth, and power. They prefer the cities of Khorvaire, such as Sharn, where they can mix into the chaos of urban life.

Epic Destiny

The following epic destiny is the ultimate fate for which countless shadar-kai vie.

Raven Consort

All your oaths are fulfilled, and your destiny is sealed with your legendary deeds. Death now loves you more than any other.

Prerequisites: 21st-level, shadar-kai, must worship the Raven Queen

Your journeys have seen you conquer uncountable dangers as a paragon of the shadar-kai people. You have traveled the planes as a committed representative of the pact that shapes shadar-kai traditions. In your way, you've shown death the respect it deserves and your deific matron true devotion, never shrinking from your duty. Through obedience to shadar-kai "convention," you've brought down foes few could imagine, much less face. Still you stand. Beings across the cosmos know and fear you as an envoy of fickle fortune. Even those who don't know you sense that you are beloved by death herself, now on the brink of the greatest reward all shadar-kai could hope for.

Immortality

Unwavering in your fidelity to your goddess and the creed she set before your people, you have become the greatest among your kind. Your name shall be a dark reminder to all shadar-kai who aspire to greatness for ages to come. Perhaps you have even warmed the bleak heart of winter and risen above those who must merely join the ranks of the sorrowsworn.

The Queen's Right Hand: Your final doom is done, and you have emerged whole and gloriously alive. Death has not fled from you, but she has instead pulled you close under her black wings. Although even gods can die, you are all but eternal in body and in fable.

Now is the time to go before your beloved queen and receive your greatest rewards. To you might be added dominion over the borders of Letherna and command over the Raven Knights, sorrowsworn nobles who watch those lands. If this is the preordained time, exarch of Letherna, perhaps you'll marshal the Raven Queen's forces to bring death to all of her remaining enemies.

Whatever the case, you stand proudly beside the deity of your people as an icon of what others can achieve. You serve her as advisor, confidant, and perhaps even lover. What will you do now that you alone have the most influence with your goddess? Might you intercede for your people? The dead? Those great ones, heroes and villains who stride the cosmos still . . . in your shadow?

Does the thirst for power still burn within you, overriding your ardor in the end? You know as well as the Raven Queen, who herself slew an elder god of the dead, that death can die. Could the very throne of your goddess one day be yours?

Raven Consort Features

Quickened Corpus (21st level): You gain a +2 bonus to Constitution and gain a number of additional hit points equal to your new Constitution modifier. You don't take the death penalty when the Raise Dead ritual is used to return you to life.

Cycle of Life (24th level): Whenever you make a death saving throw, you gain a cumulative +2 bonus to saving throws and all defenses until the end of the encounter. Each time you make a death saving throw, the bonus stacks with any existing bonus from previous death saving throws.

Additionally, if you get a result of 20 or higher on a death save, you do not spend a healing surge but still regain hit points equal to your surge value.

Death's Companions (30th level): Whenever you kill a creature, a lich vestige (see *Monster Manual*, page 176) forms from that creature's corpse. Until the end of the encounter, you treat the lich vestige as if you have it dominated. At the end of the encounter, any lich vestiges that rose to serve you during the encounter are immediately destroyed.

Raven Consort Power

Vitality Eternal — **Raven Consort Utility 26**

Your body, mind, and spirit are connected perfectly, shaking off the most debilitating effects.

Daily
No Action — **Personal**

Effect: If you have one or more effects that a save can end, you immediately successfully save against all those effects.

About the Author

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Secrets of the City Entombed

By Matthew Sernett

illustrations by William O'Connor

"Necromancy is a weapon, and like any dagger, it can take lives. Like any sword, you must train in its use lest you cause inadvertent harm. Yet necromancy is a weapon like no other. Few daggers steal souls, and swords rarely corrupt your thoughts and morals. Those items that do no doubt bear the mark of necromantic magic. You are welcome to our scholarship, but keep the secrets you learn here. Mistrust your teachers and the wisdom they impart if you will, but distrust yourself when you do. Ambition, overconfidence, self-doubt, hesitation, paranoia—discard these things. Only clear thought and judgment serve you here. Be sure you know yourself well, for beyond this gate, you are your own worst enemy."

—High Hexarch Radimus of the Scholars of Sin, giving his traditional welcome to seekers of secrets at Rahesh, the City Entombed

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Evil and necromancy seem to go hand in skeletal hand. The parasitic presence of a vampire, the cold intellect of a lich, the unstoppable rage of the death knight—these products of necromancy rightfully earn the magic its reputation for malevolence. Yet an axe can be used to cut wood or to hew men. Surely necromancy can be put to good purpose. This is the dream of those who seek necromantic knowledge in taboo Rahesh, the City Entombed, and these Scholars of Sin will share their secrets with those who dare to learn them.

This article supports *Open Grave: Secrets of the Undead*. The book provides a feast of great ideas and game material for Dungeon Masters, and players will find its magic items and rituals useful. The powers presented in this article offer players more ways to add an air of necromancy to their characters, and the setting for the discovery of those powers gives DMs a great place to reveal material from *Open Grave*. In addition, this article features material for classes from *Player's Handbook 2*, out in March 2009.

Rahesh, the City Entombed

In the darkness of history, Rahesh was a black mark on the rolls of empires that have come and gone. It crouched in the high mountains, the festering heart of a bleak nation ruled by undead. Its living citizens subsisted in and among the tombs of their ancestors, carving their homes from the stone of a series of gorges. In the dim vaults of the catacombs that honeycombed the cliffs and canyons, black-robed merchants and censer-swinging priests plied their trades to a grim populace numbed to the horrors surrounding them.

In Rahesh, the living honored undead as equals and superiors. Wealthy families often raised members as free-willed undead like wights to continue family affairs. The less well-to-do preserved departed loved ones as soulless zombies, forcing the bodies to live obscene mockeries of their lives to comfort those they left behind. If undeath was not affordable, the dead remained in a home awaiting their return to the world, lying in state in open sarcophagi kept in the living spaces of the home and included in family activities.

These obscene customs were infamous, and many nations sought to bring about their end. Time and again, many failed. The rulers of Rahesh always punished aggression with conquest, brutally bringing other kingdoms and city-states into their shadow. Rahesh seemed an undying blight upon the world . . . until the eruption.

Some claim the city's destruction was prophesied or that heroes from an undiscovered country provoked the mountain's rage, but the explosion caught everyone by surprise. The heavens vanished as the sound of the world breaking seemed to come from everywhere at once. Ash descended from the sky like flakes shaved from darkness, falling so swiftly that those who did not brush it away soon found themselves mired. Fire loomed on the horizon, and many sought to flee. Others retreated into mausoleums and tunnels. The end came swiftly, a roar of heat

and poison that swept through Rahesh and left only silence behind. The drifting ash continued to fall for days, entombing the city of tombs.

With time the ash solidified into stone, and the hush of the valley remained unbroken. The empire that had terrorized all its neighbors fell, and its conquerors did not dare approach the accursed ruins. Although the legend of horrible Rahesh lingered, knowledge of its location was lost . . . until now.

New life now seeks the death that can be found in Rahesh. Academics study the runes on doorways, masons flake away the soft stone formed by ancient ash, cartographers study the layout of mausoleums and terraces, and slowly the tomb that trapped Rahesh opens, and the city returns from its grave. These seekers call themselves the Scholars of Sin, and they hunt for lost knowledge of necromancy, an art that was second nature to the citizens of Rahesh.

The Scholars of Sin

The Scholars of Sin chose that name for their organization due to its unflinching willingness to investigate those things thought by many to be unwholesome or dangerous. The group acknowledges villainy as terrible, but it is unwilling to decry knowledge of evil as such. In their way of looking at the world, understanding the acts and tactics of evil individuals protects them from unwittingly straying from a decent path. The Scholars of Sin are interested in all kinds of lore, but their specialties lie in trades and magic that most consider vile or at least unlawful. Slavery, torture, rare intoxicants, mind-bending hallucinogens, necromancy, enchantment—these are the topics in which the Scholars become experts.

At Rahesh, the Scholars of Sin have gathered to study the necromancy practiced in the ancient city. The Scholars consider necromancy and undead to be natural elements of existence. According to their philosophies, the living are comprised of three elements: the body, the animus, and the soul. The body is simple mater. The animus provides the animating force that keeps the body in motion. The soul is the seat of self.

Most undead, they say, exist as a result of the continued functioning of the animus. The soul—the element that makes one an individual—is gone. For this reason, they have no compunctions about using undead like zombies and skeletons. Some would object to this use of the bodies of the dead, but the Scholars of Sin also permit their members to keep slaves and enchanted thralls so long as the slavery is seen as just punishment for a crime. Commanding the will of the husks of individuals past comprehension of the world seems less evil to them than the controlling actions of many leaders among the living.

Those undead who retain their souls, such as vampires and liches, often made a choice to trade a semblance of life for the uncertain rewards of the afterlife. That's a decision the often agnostic Scholars can sympathize with, even if they loathe the actions of such monsters. Taking command of such creatures, when possible, gives the Scholars powerful tools in achieving their greater aims of discovering and protecting sources of knowledge.

Rahesh Lore

A character knows the following with a successful History or Arcana check:

History

History DC 15: Legendary Rahesh was the capital of an ancient empire of undeath. It is thought to have been destroyed by a volcano long ago, wiped from the face of the earth by the gods.

History DC 20: Rahesh was a city of tombs carved into the mountains. The living, the dead, and undead resided side by side in structures cut into a steep-sided valley. Beneath it a vast underground complex of tunnels and chambers mixed catacombs with city. Extraordinarily defensible and with hidden resources and passages, Rahesh was never taken by force.

History DC 25: The volcano's eruption is the only reason the empire fell. Rahesh was the seat of power for Emperess Azzan, a lich of extraordinary power, but when the sky turned black, she was leagues away dealing with an uprising. The empire owed its success not to any one leader but to a host of advisors. For decades, Rahesh stored the souls of its greatest minds in a secret chamber, and the nation's leaders frequently sought their advice. Without the great minds and memories of the spirits trapped in Rahesh's Library of Ancestors, the empire succumbed to its neighbors.

Arcana

Arcana DC 15: The long-lost city of Rahesh has been rediscovered in a narrow valley high in the mountains. Some call it the City Entombed because ash from a volcanic eruption hid it from the world. Now a group of scholars and adventurers are excavating the site and plumbing its ruins, seeking secrets and treasures unknown to mortals for centuries.

Arcana DC 20: The only entrance into to the valley of Rahesh passes beneath a stone arch carved with the visages of two gods. As you enter, the Raven Queen gazes down upon you. Yet when you leave, you face the opposite side, which bears Vecna's one-eyed skull. This is to remind you that you enter a place sacred to death and that you must keep death's secrets when you leave.

The Scholars of Sin, the group that claims Rahesh, welcomes those ready to learn from others and willing to share the lore gained by exploring the ruins, but plunderers should stay away lest they become the Scholars' deathless servants. Members of the group do not consider necromancy evil, nor are undead abhorrent to them, but they do attack any undead who assault their members or hide secrets from them.

Arcana 25: The Scholars of Sin seek and find all manner of necromantic lore in the City Entombed, but the greatest prize they seek is a place in the ruins called the Library of Ancestors. They would greatly reward any who find it.

Setting Adventures in Rahesh

"You could hear the shrieks of women, the wailing of infants, and the shouting of men; some were calling their parents, others their children or their wives, trying to recognize them by their voices. People bewailed their own fate or that of their relatives, and there were some who prayed for death in their terror of dying. Many besought the aid of the gods, but still more imagined there were no gods left, and that the universe was plunged into eternal darkness forevermore. . . . I could boast that not a groan or cry of fear escaped me in these perils, but I admit that I derived some poor consolation in my mortal lot from the belief that the whole world was dying with me and I with it."

—Pliny the Younger, describing the destruction of Pompeii

Rahesh takes its inspiration from three real-world locations: Pompeii, Petra, and Cappadocia. Famed Pompeii, the Roman city buried under ash, is probably familiar. You might know Petra by sight due to its role as the place where the Grail was found in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. Cappadocia presents equally awesome visuals and stories. This vast region of ancient volcanic activity is riddled with structures and whole underground cities dug out of soft stone that hardens with contact to air. Doing some reading about any of these fascinating places should inspire some great ways to depict Rahesh in your campaign.

Try some of the following links to get started:

Pompeii
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pompeii
http://dsc.discovery.com/convergence/pompeii/pompeii.html
http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/pompeii.htm
Petra
http://nabataea.net/petra.html
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petra
http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/petra
Cappadocia
http://www.kaymakli.net
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cappadocia
http://www.urgupinncavehotel.com/attractions.htm

When you decide to include Rahesh and the Scholars of Sin in your game, you have a lot of options for how to handle their inclusion. Are the Scholars of Sin secretly evil or more virtuous than they appear? Perhaps the order is riven by secret alliances, adherents to various deities, and diverse hidden agendas.

New Keyword: Summoning

Arcane Power introduces summoning as a new keyword. Powers that have the summoning keyword bring creatures from other planes to serve you in a variety of ways. These powers use the following common rules.

✦ **Creates Allied Creature:** When you use a summoning power, you create a creature that is an ally to you and your allies. The power determines where the summoned creature appears.

✦ **Your Defenses and Check Modifiers:** Unless otherwise specified, the summoned creature's defenses and check modifiers equal yours when you summon it, not including any temporary bonuses or penalties to your statistics.

✦ **Speed:** The summoning power determines the summoned creature's speed.

✦ **Hit Points:** The summoned creature's maximum hit points equal your bloodied value. When the summoned creature drops to 0 hit points, it is destroyed, and you lose a healing surge. If you have no healing surges left, you instead take damage equal to half your bloodied value.

✦ **No Healing Surges:** The summoned creature lacks healing surges, but if a power allows it to spend a healing surge, you can spend a healing surge for it. The summoned creature then gains the benefit of the healing surge, instead of you gaining it.

✦ **Commanding the Creature:** The summoned creature has no actions of its own; you spend actions to command it mentally. You can command the creature only if you have line of effect to it. When you command the creature, the two of you share knowledge but not senses.

As a minor action, you can command the summoned creature to take one of the following actions, if it is physically capable of taking that action: crawl, escape, fly, open or close a door or a container, pick up or drop an item, run, stand up, shift, squeeze, or walk. The summoning power determines any special commands you can give the summoned creature and gives an action type for each command. If a special command is a minor action, you can give that command only once during each of your turns.

✦ **Duration:** Unless the summoning power states otherwise, the summoned creature lasts until the end of the encounter and then disappears. As a minor action, you can dismiss the summoned creature.

The Scholars might all be monastic academics or a collection of disparate individuals driven by personal demons. They could all be human, or they might include any number of races and welcome knowledge-seeking monsters into their ranks. The organization might be made up of a score of people or hundreds. They can be a secret cult of dark knowledge or a state-supported and well-known academic society with their own schools.

The article does not ascribe any specific region or race to Rahesh, so you can place it wherever you wish in your game. Maybe the city of Rahesh was cut from the mountains to be the seat of power for a dwarven empire obsessed with ancestor worship. Perhaps it was an eladrin enclave like Shangri-La or Brigadoon, frequently disappearing into the Feywild until it returns to the world with all its residents back as undead. It could be the site of the origin of the shadar-kai, and they might view the intrusion of the Scholars of Sin as an affront to their honored past. The tunnels and tombs of Rahesh might be infested with undead from the ancient empire who continued to rule after their kingdom was covered in stone. Other creatures might have come up from the Underdark and be scratching their way to the surface even as the Scholars use pick and spade to dig down.

You can engage the PCs with Rahesh or the Scholars of Sin in any number of ways. Here are a few ideas to prime your imagination:

• Odd objects of art and strange magic items of ancient style begin to show up in black markets and in the hands of the PCs' foes.

• An expert who knows the knowledge the PCs seek is in the mountains studying the ruins of an ancient civilization.

• A cult of Vecna the PCs sought to expose is gone when the PCs raid their hideout. The only clue to their whereabouts is a scrap of paper that has a coded message that reads, "Rahesh has been found."

• A noble entreats the PCs to save his son from slavers who took the young man into the mountains. In truth, the son murdered a member of the Scholars in a tavern and was taken to serve his victim's lover as a slave for a year.

Necromancy Powers

Each month, the Scholars of Sin delve deeper into Rahesh, dredging up the past in the hopes of discovering secrets that will help the present. In their quest for knowledge, they have brought to light necromantic techniques and secrets they share with any whom they deem responsible enough to use them.

Although this article frames the powers below as the necromantic discoveries of the Scholars of Sin, you don't need that background to use them in your game. Their sometimes dark descriptions might make them seem odd in the hands of good PCs but if you think about it, no more so than the flesh-crisping fury of *fireball* or the blood-letting butchery of *reaping strike*. This fact is something the Scholars of Sin would be quick to point out.

New Avenger Prayers

Living Death Strike — Avenger Attack 5

As you attack your chosen foe, you channel part of your own soul into your weapon.

Daily ✦ Divine, Necrotic, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Wisdom vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Wisdom modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You can lose a healing surge to deal an additional 2[W] necrotic damage.

Soul Seeker — Avenger Utility 6

You call forth a hungering spirit, allowing it to harvest the life force of your enemies.

Daily ✦ Conjuration, Divine, Healing
Minor Action **Ranged** 10
Effect: A soul-consuming spirit from the land of the dead appears in an unoccupied square within range. It remains until the end of your next turn. The soul seeker counts as an ally for flanking. Whenever you reduce an enemy that is adjacent to the soul seeker to 0 hit points, you regain a number of hit points equal to your Wisdom modifier. If you reduce the target of your *oath of enmity* to 0 hit points, you can use your *oath of enmity* power as a free action against a target adjacent to your soul seeker.
Sustain Minor: The soul seeker persists until the end of your next turn, and you can move it 5 squares, ignoring difficult terrain. The soul seeker vanishes at the end of your turn if it is out of your line of sight.

Light and Darkness — Avenger Attack 7

As you send a soul upon its final journey, divine energy strikes out from you and your foe in equal measure but opposite character.

Encounter ✦ Divine, Necrotic, Radiant, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Wisdom vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Wisdom modifier damage. If this attack reduces the target to 0 hit points, enemies adjacent to the target take 5 necrotic damage and enemies adjacent to you take 5 radiant damage.

Fated Doom — Avenger Attack 9

Your strike hurls your foe into death's embrace, and the Raven Queen rewards you with renewed vigor.

Daily ✦ Divine, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Wisdom vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Wisdom modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: If this attack reduces the target to 0 hit points, you regain a healing surge.

New Bard Spells

Funeral Dirge — Bard Attack 15

Death itself sings a wordless dirge and calls your foes to their doom.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Fear, Implement, Necrotic, Zone
Standard Action **Close** burst 2
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + Charisma modifier necrotic damage.
Effect: The burst creates a zone of deep and haunting chanting that lasts until the end of the encounter. An enemy that starts it turn in the zone is weakened until the start of its next turn.

Song of the Soul Harvest — Bard Utility 16

Your words conjure up fear of your allies, warning your enemies that the end is nigh.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Fear
Minor Action **Close** burst 5
Target: One ally in burst
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, whenever the ally reduces an enemy to 0 hit points, that ally can immediately mark all enemies within 2 squares of him or her. This mark lasts until the end of the ally's next turn.

All Soul's Ball — Bard Attack 19

A haunting tune fills the air, drawing the souls of the dying to dance among their killers.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Necrotic, Zone
Standard Action **Area** burst 2 within 10
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: 3d8 + Charisma modifier necrotic damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of your next turn.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. When an enemy within the zone drops to 0 hit points, allies adjacent to the enemy can spend a healing surge as a free action, and enemies adjacent to the slain enemy grant combat advantage until the end of their next turn.

Song of the Deadly Dancer — Bard Attack 29

Your song calls forth a dancing amalgam of shadow, blades, and death. It whirls into being and spins toward your foes, its nightmarish gamboling keeping pace with your feverish beat.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Necrotic, Summoning
Minor Action **Ranged** 10

Effect: You summon a Medium deadly dancer in an unoccupied square within range. The dancer has speed 8. It has a +4 bonus to AC and a +4 bonus to Reflex. You can give the deadly dancer the following special commands.

✦ **Standard Action:** Close burst 1; targets each adjacent enemy; Charisma vs. Reflex; 2d10 + Charisma modifier necrotic damage, and the target is marked by the deadly dancer until the end of your next turn. After all attacks are resolved, the deadly dancer can shift 2 squares.

✦ **Opportunity Attack:** Targets one creature; Charisma vs. Reflex; 2d10 + Charisma modifier necrotic damage.

New Cleric Prayers

Summon Black Reaper — Cleric Attack 15

You call upon the Raven Queeen, drawing forth an embodiment of grim fate. This dark figure harrows foes but stays the hand of death when it would touch your friends.

Daily ✦ Divine, Healing, Implement, Necrotic, Summoning
Minor Action **Ranged** 10

Effect: You summon a Large black reaper in an unoccupied 2-by-2-square space within range. The black reaper has reach 2, speed 8, and fly 8 (hover). It has a +4 bonus to AC and a +4 bonus to Will. You can give the black reaper the following special commands.

✦ **Standard Action:** Reach 2; targets one creature; Wisdom vs. Reflex; 2d8 + Wisdom modifier necrotic damage, and if the black reaper reduces its target to 0 hit points, the black reaper and one ally within 5 squares of it regain 2d6 hit points.

✦ **Opportunity Attack:** Reach 2; targets one creature; Wisdom vs. Reflex; 2d8 + Wisdom modifier necrotic damage, and if the black reaper reduces its target to 0 hit points, the black reaper and one ally within 5 squares of it regain 2d6 hit points.

Life-Stealing Light — Cleric Attack 17

A burst of light from your soul draws energy from your enemies. Each death brings greater glory.

Encounter ✦ Divine, Healing, Implement, Necrotic
Standard Action **Close** burst 3
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Wisdom vs. Will

Hit: 3d6 + Wisdom modifier necrotic damage, and if the target drops to 0 hit points before the end of your next turn, the creature that killed the target regains 1d6 hit points.

Necrotic Transference — Cleric Attack 19

You swathe your weapon in necromantic energy, draining the life from an enemy and transferring it to your ally.

Daily ✦ Divine, Necrotic, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. Will

Hit: 4[W] + Charisma modifier necrotic damage, and one ally within 10 squares of you regains a healing surge.
Miss: Half damage.

Sealing Death's Door — Cleric Utility 22

With a distant boom audible to all, death's door slams shut around an area you protect with your divine power.

Daily ✦ Divine, Zone
Standard Action **Area** burst 2 within 10

Effect: The burst creates a zone against death that lasts until the end of your next turn. When you or an ally within the zone drops to 0 hit points or fewer, that creature does not begin dying, but can continue to act normally instead. No creature is required to make death saving throws while in the zone. When a creature exits the zone, it gains the condition its current hit points dictate at the end of its next turn.
Sustain Minor: The zone persists until the end of your next turn.

New Shaman Evocations

Sacrificial Spirit — Shaman Utility 10

You temporarily sap your spirit companion of its strength, transferring its power to bolster the life force of an ally.

Daily ✦ Primal, Spirit
Free Action **Personal**

Effect: Each ally adjacent to your spirit companion regains a healing surge, and your spirit companion is immediately dismissed and cannot be called again until the start of your next turn.

Faces of the Fallen — Shaman Utility 16

Each of your enemies sees the faces of fallen friends flicker across the visage of your spirit companion.

Daily ✦ Primal, Spirit
Minor Action **Personal**

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, an enemy that starts its turn adjacent to your spirit companion is weakened until the start of its next turn.

Guardian of Howling Wrath — Shaman Attack 19

Your spirit transforms into a howling echo of death, assaults your enemies, consumes their life force, and channels it into primal power.

Daily ✦ Primal, Necrotic, Spirit
Standard Action **Melee** spirit 1
Target: One creature
Attack: Wisdom vs. Will

Hit: 4d10 + Wisdom modifier necrotic damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, when an enemy within 2 squares of your spirit companion drops to 0 hit points, you gain a +2 power bonus to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Life and Death Struggle — Shaman Utility 22

You anchor your allies' souls to their bodies, keeping them from shuffling off the mortal coil for a short while.

Daily ✦ Healing, Primal, Zone
Standard Action **Area** burst 2 within 10
Effect: Each ally within the burst can spend a healing surge. The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. While within the zone, you and your allies gain a +5 power bonus to death saving throws. Enemies within the zone cannot regain hit points.

New Swordmage Spells

Reaper's Challenge — Swordmage Attack 15

You intercede for an ally, enshrouding your foe in a specter of death that can only be exorcised by facing you.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Necrotic
Immediate Interrupt **Close** burst 5
Trigger: A creature attacks an ally
Target: Triggering creature
Attack: Intelligence vs. Will
Hit: 2d6 + Intelligence modifier necrotic damage, and the target is weakened until the end of your next turn.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, if the target makes an attack that does not include you as a target, the target is weakened until the end of your next turn.

Necromantic Disruption — Swordmage Attack 17

A burst of light from your soul ensures that each enemy's death brings you greater opportunities to strike them down.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Intelligence vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Intelligence modifier damage. This damage cannot be reduced by insubstantial.
Special: If this attack reduces your target to 0 hit points, you regain the use of this power.

Death's Resurgence — Swordmage Attack 19

Death's power turns your foe's triumph into a victory of your own. Your pain explodes from you, and as others fall, you draw strength from their defeat.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Healing, Implement, Necrotic
Immediate Interrupt **Close** burst 2
Trigger: You become bloodied or drop to 0 or fewer hit points
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d8 + Intelligence modifier necrotic damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You can spend a healing surge. If you do, you regain 1d6 additional hit points for each enemy bloodied or reduced to 0 hit points by this attack.

Death Grip — Swordmage Attack 25

You assail your foe as a distraction while a crushing hand of shadows closes its grip around your enemy.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Necrotic, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Intelligence vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Intelligence modifier damage, and you make a secondary attack with combat advantage against the same target.
Miss: You make the secondary attack against the target.
Secondary Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex
Hit: Ongoing 10 necrotic damage, and the target is restrained and cannot teleport (save ends all).
Miss: Ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends), and the target is restrained and cannot teleport until the end of your next turn.

New Warlock Spells

Well of Death — Warlock (Dark) Attack 5

You show your foes their doom, channeling dark power from your allies' very souls.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Necrotic
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + Charisma modifier necrotic damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: An ally within 5 squares of you can lose a healing surge to allow you to deal an additional 2d8 necrotic damage.

Consuming Ray — Warlock (Dark) Attack 9

You barter with your pact holder for temporary power, consuming your own life force for a powerful attack

Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Necrotic
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: 3d8 + Charisma modifier necrotic damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You can lose a healing surge to deal ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends).

Accursed Souls — Warlock (Infernal) Utility 10

The souls of those who fall while bearing your curse explode from their bodies to slay more of your foes.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Necrotic
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: An enemy you have cursed drops to 0 hit points
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, whenever an enemy you have cursed drops to 0 hit points, enemies adjacent to that target take 10 necrotic damage.

Hellfire Soul Warlock (Infernal) Attack 15

Drawing upon your infernal ties, you set a foe's soul afire.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Fire, Implement, Necrotic
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Constitution vs. Will
Hit: 3d10 + Constitution modifier necrotic and fire damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: If this attack would reduce the target to 0 hit points or fewer, you can instead reduce the target to 1 hit point and the target is dominated by you until the end of the encounter.

New Wizard Spells

Grasp of the Grave Wizard Attack 5

Skeletal hands burst from the earth and ghostly claws swirl from the air to snatch at your foes.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Necrotic, Zone
Standard Action **Area** burst 2 within 20 squares
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d10 + Intelligence modifier necrotic damage, and the target is dazed until the end of your next turn.
Miss: 1d10 + Intelligence modifier necrotic damage.
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. An enemy that enters or starts its turn in the zone takes 5 necrotic damage and is dazed until the end of your next turn.

Animate Dead Wizard Attack 9

You flood a fallen foe's animus with shadow, imbuing it with arcane strength.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Necrotic, Summoning
Minor Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One dead enemy
Effect: You summon the animated corpse of one of your fallen enemies in an unoccupied square within range. The summoned creature is the same size as the target, has a reach equal to the target's reach, and has speed 6. It gains a +2 bonus to AC, a +2 bonus to Fortitude, and the undead keyword. You can give the animated creature the following special commands.
✦ **Standard Action:** Targets one enemy in reach; Intelligence vs. Reflex; 1d10 + Intelligence modifier necrotic damage.
✦ **Opportunity Attack:** Targets one enemy in reach; Intelligence vs. Reflex; 1d10 + Intelligence modifier necrotic damage.

Soul Puppets Wizard Attack 15

You reach out and crush the animating spirits of your foes, pulling upon their limbs like a puppeteer.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Charm, Implement, Necrotic
Standard Action **Area** burst 2 within 20 squares
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Intelligence vs. Will
Hit: 4d8 + Intelligence modifier necrotic damage and the target is immobilized (save ends). An undead target takes no damage and is dominated (save ends) instead of immobilized.
Miss: Half damage.

Entombing Earth Wizard Attack 19

A maw of moaning grave dirt appears around your foe and slams shut with echoing finality.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Necrotic
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d10 + Intelligence modifier necrotic damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage and is stunned (save ends both). Other creatures cannot gain line of sight or line of effect to the target while it is stunned.
Miss: Half damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends).

About the Author

Matthew Sernett has been a designer of 4th Edition, the editor-in-chief of Dragon® Magazine, a pizza cook, an onion packer, and an assembly line worker in a spring factory. In 1999, while working for *Men's Health Magazine*, he narrowly avoided being a wardrobe tracker in the male fashion industry.

Deities and Demigods: Bane

by Ari Marmell

Illustrations by Steve Argyle and John Stanko

Called the Black Hand and the Iron General, Bane stands as the god of war and conquest. Bahamut fights for justice, Kord as a show of strength, Gruumsh for love of carnage, but Bane fights with the world as his prize.

That Bane is a god of darkest ambition, tyrannical and cruel, none can doubt. In his name, thousands die, their blood spilt to nourish the earth, and the smoke of their burning homes thick enough to blot out Pelor's sun. Yet he is also a god of discipline, order, the rule of law, and the triumph of civilization over the wild. To him even good-hearted soldiers often turn, and in his name do they draw steel. His might is not only that of arms and of overwhelming numbers, but also of iron will, meticulous strategies, and well-trained legions. Bane envisions a world that trembles to the thunder of marching armies—a world that functions beneath a single order: his own.

No other god is like Bane. Gruumsh might give in to his violent instincts, Asmodeus might revel in his growing might, Tiamat might be blinded by her greed, and Vecna might be busy with his obsessions. Only Bane, of all the evil gods, believes that what he does is best not only for himself, but for the world—even if the world refuses to acknowledge it.

And it is this belief that, just perhaps, makes Bane's evil the most insidious of them all.

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Histories, Legends, and Myths

No mortal can truly know what motivates the gods or what has occurred in the depths of prehistory. All they can do is read through the religious texts of various faiths and try to piece together a narrative that approximates the truth.

This is one such possible truth.

He had a name, once.

When he coalesced from the Astral Sea, he was one of three. They were brothers, these gods—inasmuch as beings without parents can *be* brothers—because their beliefs, their perceptions, and their loves were as one. They were Kord, Tuern, and Achra.

For an age, the brothers competed with a violence that would have destroyed whole worlds, but which they shrugged off as mere exercise, for they loved nothing more than conflict. In their struggles, Kord came to love the thrill of competition; Tuern enjoyed the sight of his foe's pain; and Achra took pleasure in the dominance, temporary though it was, that his victories earned him.

Bane vs. Bane

The Bane of the core D&D® setting is *not* the same god as the Bane of the Forgotten Realms® setting! Oh, there's substantial conceptual overlap. (The matching names probably clued you in on that.) They serve roughly the same purpose in the pantheons, their religious precepts have a great deal in common, and they make use of similar tactics and servitors.

Yet their differences are many as well, especially in terms of personal history, behavior, and even appearance. All that follows describes the core Bane, and it shouldn't necessarily apply to the Bane of Faerûn.

The War for Creation

The gods looked down from the Astral Sea and saw what the primordials had created. They coveted this world, because they understood how to make it better—though each, perhaps, had a different view of what "better" might mean. Thus did the gods attempt to reshape creation, sparking the greatest war any world has ever seen.

And for a time, the gods could gain no upper hand against the primordials. The Elemental powers were as mighty as those of the Astral, and the gods' efforts were disorganized. For every god who sought to organize their forces, such as strict Erathis and dour Moradin, others, such as Gruumsh and he who is now called the Chained God, rejected such notions.

Even the brothers, who had practiced war before they knew what war was, could reach no consensus; Kord reveled in the struggle and saw cooperation as a weakness. Long, then, did Tuern and Achra work together, combining their efforts, but soon Achra grew wroth at his brother. For Tuern, though eager to strategize and cooperate against a given foe, seemed unconcerned with the larger war. Of the war gods, only Achra believed that *all* the gods must forge themselves and their followers into a great army so that they might sweep the primordials from the face of existence. And it was then that Achra first realized that he alone truly understood the ways in which the gods—and yes, creation as a whole—must function.

The Death of Tabrach-Ti

With the cooperation of several deities who acknowledged his call for solidarity, Achra led many divine forces in battle. Eventually, Achra came face to face with the dreaded Tabrach-Ti, called by some the Queen of Bronze. As his legions swept the field clean of an elemental army that outnumbered them thrice over, Achra set upon Tabrach-Ti. The struggle took them beyond the bounds of a dozen worlds, but when it was over, the Queen of Bronze lay dead at Achra's feet—the first primordial to fall in this war.

Then, finally, even the most stubborn and chaotic gods acknowledged the need for a united front. And it was then, as well, that the servants of the primordials began to call Achra by another title.

They called him "Bane."

The General of Heaven

None then were surprised when Achra gained command over the bulk of the divine forces. Commanding not only his own angels, but those of a dozen other gods, Achra—or Bane, as he had begun to call himself, the better to demoralize the enemy—achieved victory upon victory. No, it was not easy, nor were the gods undefeated, but coalescing into a unified force marked the turning point in the war.

It also served to convince Bane further still that it was his lot to rule—that the world, the heavens, and the gods themselves functioned more efficiently under his command than they ever could on their own.

And it was during this time, as well, that Bane first made the acquaintance of a devastatingly powerful angel named Asmodeus. Although the servant of another god, Asmodeus became one of Bane's advisors, because the war god recognized in him something of a kindred spirit. The two despised one another personally, yet were disciplined enough to work together, and to do it well.

The same cannot be said for Tuern, who envied his brother's position as general and made subtle efforts to sabotage Bane's strategies in hopes of taking his place. He succeeded only in inconveniencing Bane's efforts, yet Bane would never forget this slight.

War's End

The end of the war also marked the end of Bane's cordial relations with his fellow gods, for he disagreed vehemently with the two greatest decisions they made.

Bane protested bitterly against allowing *any* primordials to survive. Though most of the gods were content that their defeated enemies retreated to the depths of the Elemental Chaos, there to pine away the eons, Bane believed it vital to pursue them even into their greatest fortresses, lest they some day threaten the divine order once more.

And second, perhaps blinded by his own arrogance and ambition, it had never occurred to Bane that, come the war's end, so too would come the end of his authority. He had such plans for the mortal world, and he assumed that the pantheon would remain a unified whole—with him at its head, of course—allowing him to carry them out. Beneath his rule, mortals would have known lives of structure, order, and regimented purpose. When the other gods refused to follow his commands—when the pantheon set about ruling the middle world as *individuals* rather than a cohesive whole—Bane was utterly stunned.

He cooperated with the rest of the pantheon only once more, leading their efforts to subdue the Chained God and guarding him while Torog the Jailor confined the lunatic in a prison without walls. But already, Bane knew that the gods could not be allowed to rule themselves, and he began plotting strategies to take power over them all.

A Second War?

Bane needed a sanctum where he could be safe from his enemies, and from which he could launch his endeavors. His own domain was ill-suited, for it was from there he had led the gods, and thus it was too familiar to them.

Rather than construct a new fortress, Bane decided to kill two birds with one stone. He would *take* his new abode, and eliminate a potent rival in the process.

Tuern never saw the attack coming. The siege was bitterly violent, and when it was done, Tuern lay dead and Bane stood as master of the iron fortress of Tuer-Chern, and the domain of Chernoggar.

Yet Bane's military offensive against the other gods ended almost before it began. Immediately after Chernoggar fell, other gods—led by Erathis and Moradin—turned Bane's own lessons against him. They put disagreements and differences aside to present a united front. Bane looked out from his iron fortress across the Astral Sea, and he saw not individual foes he could conquer one by one, but the might of the pantheon arrayed against him.

And Bane, though it galled him more bitterly than any wound, backed down. Oh, his ambitions burned as fiercely as ever, but the Black Hand recognized his rule must come about by other means.

Then Gruumsh struck. Eager to claim Tuer-Chern as his own, the One-Eyed God bound his own domain of Nishrek to Chernoggar. From that day to this, Bane's attentions have been divided by constant war with He Who Watches. (Some speculate that the other deities aided Gruumsh in his efforts to bond the two domains, thus ensuring that Bane would never have a completely free hand to act.)

The Mortal Realm

Bane soon realized that his path to power lay through the mortal realm. By conquering all with his own forces—indeed, by *transforming* nations into his own forces and teaching them to conquer others—he could seize a base of power, and a source of worship, that the other gods could not match.

Bane patronized militant communities, nations, and sects—but even those that his worshipers did not command overtly, they infiltrated, finding sympathetic ears among officers and knights. They developed new strategies and tactics, some of which came in dreams from Bane. They taught the benefits of an organized, disciplined military and laid down codes of laws that shaped many early civilizations.

The Goblins Rise

During this early age, a struggle raged for command over the goblin races. The goblins themselves were far more numerous, while the bugbears were stronger; thus the hobgoblins found themselves on the verge of being overwhelmed.

An early war-priest named Senekos first brought Bane's word to the struggling hobgoblins; Bane had offered to teach them disciplined warfare in exchange for their worship. The shamans of the goblinoid god Maglubiyet attempted to stamp out the growing heresy, sacrificing many of their own (and Senekos). Still, as the hobgoblins became ever more aware of the benefits of Bane's teachings, his worship spread through the population.

The deal was sealed when Bane sallied forth from Tuer-Chern and confronted Maglubiyet in the goblin god's domain. That Bane is now supreme god of most hobgoblins, and that Maglubiyet is his exarch, leaves little doubt as to the outcome.

The Birth of Hell

Bane was the only god who foresaw Asmodeus's rebellion, for he'd expected it ever since he'd battled alongside the angel, which is when he learned of Asmodeus's aspirations.

When the rebellion ignited, Bane was prepared to take advantage of it. He offered the seditious angel his assistance—albeit not directly, for Bane and Asmodeus feared to draw other gods into the war. Rather, Bane sent several great warrior-angels, not as participants but as "advisors," there to offer expertise on

matters strategic and tactical. None can say whether their presence made any meaningful difference, or what their aid cost, but the devils have always dealt (a *little*) more straightforwardly with Bane's followers than other mortals, and the Iron General's worshipers are more likely than any others (save Asmodeus's own worshipers) to summon and employ devils.

The Modern Day

Bane remains the patron of conquerors and generals, soldiers and mercenaries. Some of his worshipers are crueler, more evil, or more rigid than others, but all recognize that fear is a soldier's greatest weapon, and that it falls to the strong to govern the weak.

From his iron fortress in Chernoggar, Bane continuously schemes. All the worlds are his battlefield, all the gods his adversaries, for he knows that the right to rule is his alone.

Worshiping Bane

Bane dwells in the hearts of conquerors, the minds of officers, and the strong sword-arms of disciplined soldiers. He is the patron of all who would see their neighbors overrun, pacified, or enslaved, and of all who subscribe to the doctrine that to rule, one need be strong enough, smart enough, and skilled enough to *take* command.

Bane is an evil god who seeks to conquer and rule no matter the cost, but not all his followers come from the same mold. Many turn to Bane seeking the strength to battle the savage wild. The Black Hand's doctrine of conquest, order, and military might appeals to soldiers, generals, mercenaries, and even rulers of all stripes. Even a good-aligned officer might utter prayers to the Iron General before battle; the sovereign of a city-state might subjugate his neighbors, not out of innate greed, but for the safety of his people. These are slippery slopes, and many a military leader has fallen to evil through the worship of Bane—frequently by "doing what is necessary" or "acting for the greater good." The fact remains, however, that of all the evil gods, Bane boasts the greatest number of worshipers who are not evil and who are attracted by his doctrines of rigid discipline, strict law, or expansionism.

No Single God

It's worth reiterating that few folk of the default setting devote themselves to any single god. Priests or holy warriors of Bane might dedicate themselves exclusively to the Iron General, but everyone else who worships Bane does so alongside a selection of other deities. No single god encompasses all aspects of the average person's life, and so average people devote their prayers to whichever god seems most appropriate given the circumstances.

That's not to say that everyone worships *every* god. A truly good person has little use for Lolth; a law-abiding town-dweller might never have heard of Gruumsh. Rather, every community and individual has a collection of deities to whom they devote their reverence. They occasionally offer a prayer to another god, if circumstances warrant—only a fool goes to sea without invoking Melora, and a village that doesn't normally venerate Bane might offer him prayers over a makeshift altar if suddenly forced to war—but their "personal pantheon" receives the overwhelming bulk of their attention.

A community's collection of deities shapes how they see each *individual* god. A community beset by the dangers of the surrounding wilderness, and includes Bane and Erathis among their deities, likely views Bane as more of a stabilizing influence, and less actively evil, than a tyrannical city-state whose power-hungry leaders worship Asmodeus alongside the Black Hand.

Bane is most commonly worshiped in larger communities. This is sometimes because the community's code of laws and military hierarchy inspire worship of rigid, disciplined gods—or the reverse, in which the citizens see a lawless culture or the lack of a standing military as problems in need of correcting. Communities with a history of expansionism are particularly fertile ground for Bane, since the people grant him thanks for prior success and could spread their beliefs through future conquests.

Smaller communities, by contrast, rarely have an organized military hierarchy, and they have neither an interest in conquering surrounding regions, nor the means to do so. Still, a small but growing number of villagers are starting to include Bane in their community practices, in hopes of growing those communities into military powers. The first step, of convincing the town's leaders to form a standing army, is all too easy given the dangers the world's wilderness can pose . . .

Most communities in which Bane is one of the dominant gods are strictly regimented. The military has a strong hand in governing—either ruling directly, or functioning at the behest of a leader who has strong militant leanings. The law is likely complex and rigidly structured, without much room for leeway or extenuating circumstances. Where Bane is worshiped alongside gods such as Erathis, Ioun, or Moradin, those laws are strict, maybe even harsh, but ultimately fair. When the Iron General is paired with gods such as Asmodeus or Tiamat (or Erathis again, who is worshiped as frequently in malign communities as benevolent ones), those laws are draconian in their punishments and brutal in their execution. Even minor crimes are punished severely—indentured servitude, torture, and execution are common punishments.

Despite the potential for oppression, many folk *prefer* communities in which Bane is widely worshiped. Because such communities are militarily powerful and orderly, they are well protected and

have relatively little crime. It might be distasteful to watch what one says, keep abreast of the latest changes in the law, and occasionally witness the public torture or execution of an "example," but for some, safety and order are worth it.

In communities where worship of Bane is not associated with the government, his followers are frequently linked with militant organizations, such as mercenary guilds or officer's training colleges. These organizations worship a variety of militant gods, frequently pairing Bane with Kord, Moradin, or even—on rare occasions—Bahamut. Sometimes, if Bane-worship is unwelcome in a community (such as a town in which the dominant deities are all good-aligned), followers of Bane might form an underground—planning a coup to overthrow the government with one more favorable to their faith—even if they *also* worship some of the community's patron deities.

No Universal "Church"

Just as the "points of light" setting presumes individual communities are rarely linked into large kingdoms, so too are the world's religions made up of autonomous sects, without monolithic governing entities. There are no "churches," in the sense of worldwide theological authorities that oversee all practitioners of a given faith.

Thus, a temple or sect of Bane in one community is different—at least in the details, and frequently in major practices—from any other. It also means that followers of Bane aren't necessarily in agreement on religious matters. It's possible for two or more Bane-worshipers to prove competitors, or even downright enemies, spilling blood over matters of theology or as each attempts to conquer territory held by the other.

Symbols of Bane

Bane's most widely recognized symbol is also the most confusing to theologians. Bane has no particular link to dragons, so how did the three-taloned claw come to be associated with him, let alone become his most ubiquitous emblem?

Centuries ago, Bane's greatest symbol was an abstract shape representing the narrow open visor of a helmet. As that style of helm faded from use and the meaning of the symbol was largely forgotten, new generations of worshipers attempted to explain the peculiar shape. Uncertain what the descending contours were meant to suggest, they interpreted them as the digits of a great claw.

In addition to the draconic claw, various temples of Bane make use of the original "abstract helm" design or a gauntleted fist as their holy icons.

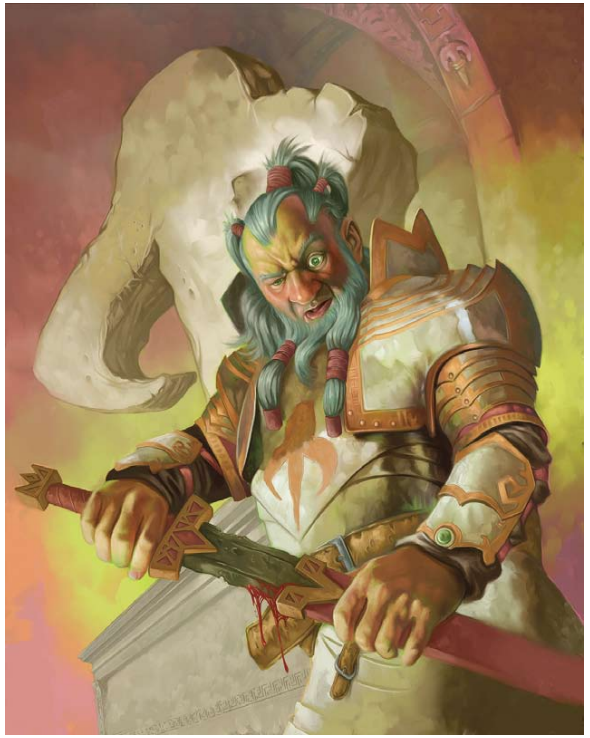
Omens and Signs

The gods rarely commune directly with mortals, but they do guide them, couching their desires and their displeasure in strange dreams and peculiar portents. The following are just a few forms that Bane's omens might take.

If Bane wishes a follower to go to battle against a particular foe, he frequently sends dreams of that enemy attacking and defeating the dreamer in battle.

Omens of Bane's displeasure include the following:

- ✦ Weapons rust and tarnish regardless of how much care is lavished upon them.
- ✦ Long-healed wounds ache.
- ✦ The worshiper grows clumsy and drops weapons during practice.
- ✦ Warhorses, hounds, and other beasts of battle snarl at, and refuse to cooperate with, the individual.



Omens of Bane's approval include the following:

- ✦ Old weapons suddenly appear new.
- ✦ One of Bane's symbols appears in spilled blood, broken glass, or the like.
- ✦ The enemy abruptly shows fear, hesitation, and low morale.
- ✦ Warhorses and other beasts of war become suddenly and abnormally cooperative.
- ✦ Someone who boasts a black right hand or gauntlet—either in real life or in dreams—appears to offer advice.

Major Precepts

Despite the widespread nature of worship in the world, worshipers of Bane are expected to follow universal precepts. These primary teachings of Bane are inviolate tenets of the religion.

Fear Is a Two-Edged Sword

"Never allow your fear to gain mastery over you, but drive it into the hearts of your foes."

Bane despises cowards. Every soldier must acknowledge fear, examine it, and put it aside. To fear is natural, but to *act* on fear is to prove unworthy. Retreat is permissible when overmatched, as long as it is driven by tactical concerns, not emotional weakness.

But Bane's worshipers mustn't merely avoid being mastered by fear; they must become its master in turn. Terror is the greatest weapon in Bane's arsenal. The Iron General teaches his followers to be cruel; punish resistance with suffering, and you break the will of others to resist. Where Bane has become dominant through military victory, torture and public execution are commonplace. When an enemy fears to oppose you, only *then* has that enemy been conquered.

Order Is Sacrosanct

"Punish insubordination and disorder."

A related precept to the first, this tenet demands that all who disobey—be they authority military, religious, or legal—must suffer. Where worship of Bane dominates, the law is strict, and transgression cannot be tolerated—no excuses, no extenuating circumstances. Bane's most devoted followers believe that his worship must spread until all the world is organized under his laws, but for now they enforce rigid obedience in what governments, communities, and organizations they can.

Where followers of Bane conflict over this precept (and the doctrine of fear as well) is in how those punishments are doled out. Those who associate Bane with gods of order and civilization understand that cruelties are to be inflicted *only* on those who defy them. They believe that, if people see no difference between acquiescence and rebellion, they have no incentive to acquiesce.

Those who worship Bane alongside more brutal deities, however, inflict tortures upon their enemies or conquered subjects *regardless* of behavior. These are the cruelest, most violent tyrants, torturing and slaughtering without cause. These individuals maintain that by keeping the people broken, suffering, and afraid, they can never develop the strength to rise up.

Without Strength, There Is No Victory

"Hone your combat skills to perfection, whether you are a mighty general or a lone mercenary."

Warriors must struggle constantly to challenge and improve themselves. Their skills must be great enough to overcome any adversary or impediment, not only to achieve victories, but to honor Bane.

Some of Bane's faithful—particularly those who also worship other militant deities, such as Kord—take this precept literally, valuing only martial skill and looking down on people whose talents lie elsewhere. More broad-minded worshipers interpret "combat skills" to mean anything that can advance the faith's cause. In their view, any worshiper who strives for excellence honors Bane.

Services and Ceremonies

Rites to Bane are extraordinarily simple. The Iron General holds no specific days as holy, though individual sects have their own dates of significance. Ceremonies consist primarily of exhortations to glory or tales of prior champions, frequently conducted before battle alongside simple altars of iron or stone.

Most warriors offer a brief prayer to the Black Hand before combat. This is not a prayer for Bane's aid, for no soldier should *require* such aid; rather, these are prayers of thanks for the strength Bane has granted, and a dedication to Bane of all the lives that will soon end.

Holy Texts

Few holy texts are devoted to Bane. Two of the most important are discussed here.

The Iron Codex: The *Iron Codex* devotes only a few passages to matters of religious doctrine. The bulk of the tome is a treatise on tactics and strategies in warfare, written by General Senekos (a paternal ancestor of the war-priest who bore his name, and who served as Bane's first missionary to the hobgoblins). Supposedly, these secrets were handed down from Bane, and the *Iron Codex* first introduced the mortal races to regimented military tactics.

The Reneskria Scrolls: According to religious tradition, these scrolls are the recorded observations of a woman named Reneskria. Initially a "camp follower" traveling with an army led by officers devoted to multiple deities, Reneskria grew into a potent warrior by following the example of those officers who practiced Bane's teachings, and eschewing the behavior and company of those who venerated "lesser" gods. The *Reneskria Scrolls* are considered a valuable example, not only because they show a warrior rising to power from the lowest beginnings through the teachings of Bane, but because of her detailed accountings of the agonizing defeats of those who turned away from the Iron General.

And this is frequently the extent of their religious practice. Bane cares not for *words* of praise; he wants to see his followers *act*. He wants to see their foes fall, their territories conquered and enslaved, and codes of law put into place to govern the lawless.

Unlike many other evil deities, Bane does *not* demand blood sacrifices during religious rites. In fact, slaying a helpless foe during a ceremony *offends* the Iron General, not because he has any care for the victim's life, but because it shows no skill on the part of the worshiper and accomplishes nothing to advance the worshiper's ambitions. A foe slain in battle, a prisoner lawfully executed, a political rival assassinated—*these* are the sacrifices Bane loves.

Aphorisms and Words of Wisdom

Though Bane's followers care little for flowery speech, a few common phrases have crept into practice, carried by travelers or spread throughout missives and holy treatises.

He who rules is strong. Often misunderstood, this aphorism seemingly suggests that anyone in a position of leadership is powerful. What it means is that only the strong can *truly* rule—for a weak ruler won't remain a ruler very long.

Speech is no good shield. The true warrior never allows the foe to talk him or her out of acting. Begging, threats, wheedling—all are signs of weakness to be ignored.

Strength Through Discipline, Order Through Strength, Peace Through Order. This isn't an axiom so much as a motto, espoused by many of Bane's faithful (such as the Order of the Cleansing Blade). It is, essentially, the driving philosophy of Bane's faith, boiled down to its core principles.

Sample Sects

Worship of Bane (or any god) varies by region, and it is strongly influenced by the other deities revered by a given community. You can use these sample sects as written, or as models from which to design your own.

The Iron Crown

The "Iron Crown" is both the name of an imposing temple-fortress, and the sect based therein. Located in miserable Sutulak, a center of slave-trading and amoral mercenary guilds, the Iron Crown is an iconic example of Bane's vilest practices.

Although the priests have no official standing in the government, the ruling council of slave-traders, merchants, and military officers are all worshipers of the gods of the Iron Crown. So are the bulk of Sutulak's citizens, either because they, too, have been enriched by the laws here, or they hope to assuage the gods and prevent themselves from falling victim to those laws. As such, the priests hold substantial influence throughout Sutulak.

The Iron Crown boasts shrines to Bane, Asmodeus, Tiamat, and Torog. Bane is seen as a merciless tyrant who enslaves all he conquers, and who mandates a strict adherence to laws so draconian that even minor transgressions can lead to long-term indentured servitude—and thus, more profits for Sutulak.

Alignment: Evil.

Governing Precept: Anything the strong can do is justified, because the weak exist only to serve.

Hierarchy: The Iron Crown's three priestly ranks, in descending order, are rex sacrorum (the high priest), pontifex, and flamen. Due to their stronger standing in Sutulak, only priests of Bane or Tiamat ever become rex sacrorum.

Rites and Ceremonies: Priests conduct monthly ceremonies in which newly acquired slaves are branded and their future toils dedicated to the gods. Each slave purchase is blessed, in hopes of a long and productive service, and the Iron Crown accepts monies and goods from worshipers praying that they themselves are never enslaved.

The Iron Crown observes three holy days: The Day of Enlightenment, dedicated to all four gods, commemorating the rise of the ruling council; the Day of Triumph, dedicated to Bane and Tiamat, commemorating the establishment of Sutulak; and the Day of the Vacant Throne, dedicated primarily to Asmodeus but honoring Bane as well, celebrating Asmodeus's ascension.

The Order of the Cleansing Blade

This combination temple hierarchy and knightly order was founded in the powerful city-state of Korrend Resk. For a time, Korrend Resk was a small nation unto itself, commanding the fealty of lesser communities for many leagues. Today, Korrend Resk claims only the lands within a day's ride, but the Order remains active within more distant towns.

The Order represents Bane's rigid, regimented aspects. This highly disciplined sect values military supremacy above all else. The highest officers of Korrend Resk belong to the Order, essentially granting the temple full control over the armies. Although the Order's rule is draconian, and their goals are expansionist, their cruelty is a tool, not a goal. (In other words, though evil, it is not the same sort of vile, deliberate evil as the Iron Crown.)

The Order of the Cleansing Blade is devoted to Bane, Erathis, and Kord. Korrend Resk is devoted to those three deities, but also Tiamat and Moradin.

Alignment: Evil.

Governing Precept: "Strength Through Discipline, Order Through Strength, Peace Through Order." Law and discipline are sacrosanct.

Hierarchy: The Order is organized along military lines. Religious leaders append "priest" to their rank, such as "priest-general" or "priest-captain."

Rites and Ceremonies: Other than the induction of new members in a brief service, the Order boasts no specific rites. Their holy days commemorate victories over various foes, but these are marked only with short prayers of thanks, not day-long celebrations.

The Priory of the Unbending Shield

The Priory is based out of the Temple of the Unbending Shield in the large wilderness town of Green River Bend. Here, the struggles of daily life involve simple survival, for the surrounding forests are home to dire animals, orc tribes, and hostile fey. The people have turned to a religion that offers both protection and a code of laws that raises them above the level of the savages beyond.

Green River Bend's volunteer militia includes many adult members of the community, and every member of the Priory. The priests encourage citizens to participate, and they offer training for all who agree. Bane is seen as the strong sword-arm of the town, whose darker and more vicious aspects are, for the nonce, unfortunate necessities.

The Temple of the Unbending Shield includes shrines to Bane, Erathis, Bahamut, Gruumsh, and Melora—the latter two in hopes of assuaging the hazards of the wild, rather than out of veneration. The sect's actual ceremonies rarely include them.

Alignment: Unaligned.

Governing Precept: Only through law, discipline, and strength can civilization stand against the savage wild.

Hierarchy: The leading priest is called primate; all other priests bear the title vedette.

Rites and Ceremonies: The vedettes oversee sessions of prayer and feasting, which are intended to give thanks to the gods, to celebrate the triumph of civilization over the wild, and to be a show of defiance to the beasts beyond the walls. They celebrate two holy days: Foundation, the day the town was first carved from the wilderness; and Bladefall, a celebration of Bane's legendary defeat of Tabrach-Ti.

Bane's Minions

Bane's minions include soldiers of nearly all races and level of skill. Presented here is only a small selection of his most potent servitors.

Aspects of Bane

Aspects of Bane appear either at the behest of powerful clerics, or when the Iron General wishes to influence the course of battle. The two presented here are among those he frequently manifests.

Both aspects appear as Large men, heavily muscled and athletic. They wear plumed, open-visored helms of a style not seen in centuries, yet no matter how they turn, nothing can be seen through those visors save a pair of burning eyes. Each wears a heavy gauntlet of black iron upon his right hand.

The Centurion	**Level 26 Elite Soldier**
Large immortal humanoid (subtype)	XP 18,000
Initiative +23	**Senses** Perception +19; darkvision
HP 486; **Bloodied** 243	
AC 44; **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 38	
Immune fear; **Resist** 20 poison, 20 radiant	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 7	
Action Points 1	
Ebon Spear (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon** Reach 3; +31 vs. Fortitude; 4d4 + 11 damage, plus the target is pushed 2 squares. *Effect:* The target is marked until the end of the Centurion's next turn.	
Ebon Gladius (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon** Reach 2; +31 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 11 damage, plus the target is slowed. *Effect:* The target is marked until the end of the Centurion's next turn.	
Ebon Spear (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon** Ranged 20/40; +31 vs. Fortitude; 4d4 + 11 damage, plus the target is pushed 2 squares. *Effect:* The spear instantly returns to the Centurion's hand.	
Furious Assault (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Weapon** The Centurion makes an *ebon spear* attack (either melee or ranged) and an *ebon gladius* attack. *Special:* The Centurion can use this attack at the culmination of a charge.	
Fearsome Visage (minor; recharge when first bloodied) ✦ **Fear** Close burst 2; +29 vs. Will; the target immediately moves its speed away from the Centurion. The fleeing target avoids unsafe squares and difficult terrain if it can.	
Positioning Style (minor 1/turn; at-will) Close burst 2; targets one enemy in burst; +31 vs. Will; slide the target 3 squares.	
Threatening Reach The Centurion can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach.	
Combat Superiority The Centurion gains a +6 bonus to opportunity attacks. An enemy struck by his opportunity attack stops moving if a move provoked the attack. If it still has actions remaining, it can use them to resume moving. Any creature that is damaged by the Centurion takes ongoing 15 necrotic damage (save ends)	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Goblin, Primordial, Supernal
Skills Athletics +27, Intimidate +26, Religion +24	
Str 29 (+22)	**Dex** 26 (+21) **Wis** 22 (+19)
Con 27 (+21)	**Int** 22 (+19) **Cha** 26 (+21)
Equipment bronze breastplate, ebon gladius (as short sword), ebon spear	

The Centurion Tactics

The Centurion appears when Bane wishes to participate in a battle, or at the behest of his clerics. He takes an advantageous position and makes brutal use of reach and *combat superiority* to keep foes from winning past. He uses *fearsome visage* to terrify enemy champions, in hopes of demoralizing the opposing ranks.

The Imperator Tactics

The Imperator manifests when Bane seeks to take a leadership role in a conflict. He leads from the front, making melee attacks where necessary, but he prefers to focus on empowering his allies. Through judicious use of minor actions, he can allow several to take multiple actions, or transform them into far more potent adversaries than they might otherwise be.

Aspect of Bane Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Religion check.

DC 25: Powerful priests of Bane can summon an aspect of the Iron General to fight beside or even lead them. Sometimes, an aspect of Bane appears without being called if he wishes to influence the battle—or just misses the thrill of combat.

DC 30: An aspect is sentient, though its mind is not privy to the god's own thoughts. An aspect is capable of independent thought, but it obeys the commands of its creator unless they clearly contradict Bane's ethos or goals.

The Imperator **Level 29 Elite Controller (Leader)**
Large immortal humanoid XP 30,000
Initiative +22 **Senses** Perception +21; darkvision
Relentless Legion aura 5; allies who start their turn within the area gain 15 temporary hit points.
HP 536; **Bloodied** 268
AC 45; **Fortitude** 44, **Reflex** 41, **Will** 42
Immune fear; **Resist** 20 poison, 20 radiant
Saving Throws +2
Speed 7
Action Points 1

Ebon Cestus (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fear, Weapon**
Reach 2; +33 vs. Will; 2d8 + 10 damage, plus the target is weakened until the end of the Imperator's next turn.

Iron Fist (minor; recharges when first bloodied) ✦ **Charm, Fear**
Ranged 10; +33 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The target cannot use encounter or daily powers (save ends).

Curse of Bane (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Area burst 2 within 20; +31 vs. Will; 2d6 + 10 psychic damage, and each target is immobilized (save ends).

Blasphemy of Bane (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Psychic**
Area burst 2 within 20; +31 vs. Will; 4d6 + 5 psychic damage, and ongoing 10 psychic damage (save ends).

Inspiring Leader (minor 1/turn; at-will)
Close burst 20; one ally in the burst can make an immediate basic melee attack against a target in its reach; for that attack, if the target is immobilized, and the ally gains a +10 bonus to damage rolls and deals a critical hit on a roll of 18–20.

Divine Inspiration (minor; encounter)
Close burst 10; all allies in the burst gains a +10 bonus to damage rolls and deal a critical hit on a roll of 18–20, until the end of the Imperator's next turn. (This bonus damage does not stack with *inspiring leader*.)

Vicious Harrier
If the Imperator and an ally are both adjacent to the same enemy, that enemy grants combat advantage to them even if they are not flanking.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Goblin, Primordial, Supernal
Skills Athletics +29, Intimidate +27, Religion +27
Str 30 (+24) **Dex** 27 (+22) **Wis** 25 (+21)
Con 28 (+23) **Int** 26 (+22) **Cha** 27 (+22)
Equipment bronze breastplate, ebon cestus (gauntlet), ebon spear

Maglubiyet, Exarch of Bane

Bane's exarchs are among the mightiest in existence. Standing near the top of that heap is Maglubiyet, former deity of the hobgoblins and still a powerful demigod.

Maglubiyet appears as a giant hobgoblin with ebony skin, eyes of flickering fire, and vicious talons. He carries a jagged axe that seems fully capable of cleaving the world in twain.

Maglubiyet, the Mighty One **Level 32 Solo Brute**
Large immortal humanoid XP 135,000
Initiative +25 **Senses** Perception +23; darkvision
Inescapable Death aura 4, only when bloodied; enemies who start their turns within the aura are slowed until the start of their next turn.
HP 1,465; **Bloodied** 732; see *bloodied rage*
AC 46 (44 when bloodied); **Fortitude** 48, **Reflex** 45 (43 when bloodied), **Will** 44 (50 against fear)
Resist fire 15, radiant 30
Saving Throws +5 (+7 against fear)
Speed 6 (8 when bloodied), teleport 6
Action Points 2

Axe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +35 vs. AC; 3d8 + 6 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

Claw (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +35 vs. AC; 4d8 + 11 damage, plus target is grabbed or knocked prone (Maglubiyet's choice).

Retribution Slash (immediate reaction, when damaged by a melee or ranged attack; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Maglubiyet makes one axe attack against a target within reach.

Brutal Arc (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Close burst 2; Maglubiyet makes an axe attack against all enemies in the burst that he can see.

Hurl Foe (standard; must have Medium or smaller enemy grabbed; at-will)
Maglubiyet throws the grabbed enemy at a Medium or smaller target. Ranged 10; +33 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 7 damage to target and the hurled enemy, plus target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone. *Effect:* The hurled enemy falls prone in the square formerly occupied by the target (or the nearest legal square, if the target was not pushed).

Unholy Fire (standard; recharge when first bloodied) ✦ **Fire**
Close blast 6; +31 vs. Reflex; 3d12 + 11 fire damage, plus the target is weakened and blinded (save ends). *Miss:* Half damage, and the target is blinded until the end of its next turn.

Unholy Word (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Psychic**
Close burst 4; bloodied enemies only; +31 vs. Will; the target takes psychic damage equal its healing surge value; targets of 20th level or lower are killed instead.

Unholy Vengeance (no action; when Maglubiyet is reduced 0 hit points; encounter) ✦ **Fire, Psychic**
Close burst 10; +33 vs. Fortitude; 5d10 + 11 fire and psychic damage. *Miss:* Half damage.

Bloodied Rage
Maglubiyet's axe and claw attacks deal +10 damage when he is bloodied.

Hobgoblin Resilience (immediate reaction, when Maglubiyet suffers an effect that a save can end; encounter)
Maglubiyet rolls a saving throw against the effect.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Goblin, Supernal
Skills Intimidate +30, Religion +27
Str 32 (+27) **Dex** 29 (+25) **Wis** 25 (+23)
Con 29 (+25) **Int** 22 (+22) **Cha** 29 (+25)
Equipment axe

Maglubiyet Tactics

Maglubiyet uses *unholy fire* as he closes, but then prefers to chop and shred his foes up close. He does, however, make use of *unholy word* as soon as he has at least two bloodied foes within range.

Maglubiyet Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Religion check.

DC 20: Maglubiyet is a powerful exarch of Bane, and the patron deity of many goblins.

DC 25: Maglubiyet was once a full-fledged god before Bane defeated him. He remains faithful to his conqueror—if only because he fears the consequences of disloyalty.

When not busy serving Bane's purposes elsewhere, he rules the fiefdom of Clangor in Chernoggar.

The Black General

Many of Bane's champions are warriors of great skill, strength, and determination. As lone foes, they are dangerous; as leaders of others, they are devastating.

You can use Imscari as written, or as a model for other champions of Bane.

Lucresia Imscari, the Black General **Level 22 Elite Soldier (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, half-elf XP 8,300
Initiative +17 **Senses** Perception +16; low-light vision
Never Retreat aura 6; allies who enter or start their turns within the aura gain +2 to Will against fear effects, and +2 to saving throws against fear effects.
HP 416; **Bloodied** 208
AC 40; **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 34 (+36 against fear)
Saving Throws +2 (+4 against fear)
Speed 5
Action Points 1

Mace (standard; at-will) ✦ **Radiant, Weapon**
+29 vs. AC; 2d6 + 8 plus 1d6 radiant. On a critical hit, the target is blinded until the end of Imscari's next turn.

Lance of Faith (standard; at-will) ✦ **Radiant**
Ranged 5; +27 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 8 radiant damage.

Aggressive Attack (standard; at-will) ✦ **Radiant, Weapon**
Imscari makes two mace attacks.

Divine Smite (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Radiant**
+29 vs. AC; 3d8 + 8 damage plus 2d8 radiant damage and all allies within 5 squares gain 10 temporary hit points or make a saving throw against a single effect that a save can end.

Gleaming Shield (immediate interrupt, when Imscari is targeted with an attack by a target within 4 squares; at-will) ✦ **Radiant**
Close blast 4, must include the triggering attacker; +25 vs. Fortitude; 3d8 + 3 radiant damage, and the target takes a –2 penalty to attacks (including the triggering attack) until the end of Imscari's next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Goblin
Skills Athletics +23, Diplomacy +20, Insight +18, Intimidate +23, Religion +23
Str 27 (+19) **Dex** 19 (+15) **Wis** 21 (+16)
Con 24 (+18) **Int** 24 (+18) **Cha** 24 (+18)
Equipment plate armor, light shield emblazoned with holy symbol of Bane, mace

Lucresia Imscari Tactics

Imscari prefers to lead her allies into melee combat, standing in the thick of things and laying about with her mace and *gleaming shield*.

Black General Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful History check.

DC 15: The sobriquet of the "Black General" was originally used by the same army chronicled by Reneskria in her *Scrolls*. Today, several different knighthoods of Bane's followers use it.

DC 20: One such sect is the Order of the Cleansing Blade; the title is granted to the priest-general's favored champion. The current Black General is a warrior by the name of Lucresia Imscari.

Bane-Worshiping PCs

Followers of Bane are frequently cast as villains, and that's a valid take; their god is vicious, tyrannical, and cruel. Then again, he's also highly disciplined and favors warriors—traits that appeal to many adventurers.

The majority of Bane-worshipers who are not evil are unaligned. Most are martial characters, but you can have unaligned divine Bane-worshipers in your party. As long as they focus on Bane's identity as a god of war and order, and less on his more brutal traits, they can prove as heroic as anyone.

It's even possible to have a good (nondivine) follower of Bane, though most such characters gravitate toward Bahamut, Kord, or Pelor. Fighters who believe in military discipline, rangers who seek to expand civilization to protect people from the wild, or any character with a fair but draconian view of criminal punishment can justify venerating Bane.

PCs who worship Bane adventure for a variety of reasons. They might seek to test their skills against ever-more challenging opponents. They might hope to gain sufficient wealth and prestige to carve out their own little fiefdom, or seek to overthrow an enemy on behalf of their temple or their home town. Or, for that matter, they might have the same personal reasons as anyone else; a character's religion need not be the driving force behind adventuring.

Temples of Bane

At the heroic tier, local priests might hold the PCs up as examples to be emulated, since they are people who have risen above the common folk to fight all manner of fearsome foes for Bane's glory. This can bring public adulation, but also jealousy from other worshipers, or hatred and fear from worshipers of other gods. The priests might expect the PCs to be willing to do them favors "in the name of Bane."

At paragon levels, PCs are well known, at least regionally. Tales of their exploits have circulated through various temples, and priests either tout them as champions of Bane, or—if the priests have a different interpretation of Bane's teachings than the PCs—try to turn people against them by calling them heretics and apostates. Temples and communities might demand the PCs battle ever more dangerous enemies, and the PCs might receive omens from Bane. Locals in the community might assume that the PCs are willing to take on responsibilities for the temple (either conducting services or serving as its protectors and soldiers), and they could feel betrayed if the PCs refuse.

Epic characters are practically religious figures in their own right. Their exploits have spread far and wide; many worshipers consider them ancient heroes reborn, or touched by the hand of Bane. New religious

parables form around them, and old tales are altered to make their heroes more like the PCs. Some followers of Bane assume that the PCs act and speak with his blessing, and so they treat the PCs as religious leaders. Other temples and sects, with different doctrinal interpretations, seek to destroy the PCs before their actions and beliefs "taint" Bane's teachings. The PCs might interact with exarchs and aspects of Bane, and they face attack by priests and exarchs of gods opposed to Bane. At high epic levels, the PCs might be approached to become exarchs themselves.

Bane's Tactics [Channel Divinity]

Prerequisites: Channel Divinity class feature, must worship Bane

Benefit: You can invoke the power of your deity to use *Bane's tactics*.

Channel Divinity: Bane's Tactics Feat Power

The training and the strength of Bane allow you to strike with skill like no other.

Encounter • Divine, Weapon
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You make an opportunity attack.
Effect: You can use one of your 1st-level at-will melee attack powers that has a single target in place of your basic melee attack. You add your Strength bonus to the damage roll of this attack if you hit.
Special: You must take the Bane's Tactics feat to use this power.

Soldier of Conquest

"*You cannot defeat me, for I draw on the strength of the Iron General.*"

Prerequisite: Any martial or divine class, must worship Bane

You have become a true warrior of Bane—a soldier who lives for combat and conquest. You are granted powers to aid you in that conquest, but only if you use them wisely; they'll not do the job for you.

Even if you're of a martial class, this paragon path's powers are divine prayers.

Soldier of Conquest Path Features

Chosen Foe (11th level): Any target that you have marked or that has an effect that you caused that a save can end grants combat advantage to you.

Strike Them Down (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, each enemy adjacent to you grants combat advantage to you and all your allies until the end of your next turn.

Never Falter (16th level): You gain a +2 bonus to your Will and to saves against charm and fear effects.

Soldier of Conquest Prayers

Suffer the Foe Soldier of Conquest Attack 11

The wrath of Bane flows through your weapon, sapping your enemy's perseverance.

Encounter • Divine, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] damage, and the target takes a –2 penalty to saving throws until the end of your next turn.

Fell the Foe Soldier of Conquest Utility 12

You lash out with impossible speed, knocking the foe from his feet.

Free Action • Divine, Weapon
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You hit and deal damage with an opportunity attack.
Effect: The attack knocks the foe prone, in addition to its normal effects. Until the end of your next turn, if the opponent attempts to stand, it provokes an opportunity attack from you if you are adjacent to the target.

Indomitable Assault Soldier of Conquest Attack 20

The faltering of your foe grants you added strength and speed.

Daily • Divine, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 4[W] damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: After resolving the attack, move up to your speed and make a secondary attack against a different target in reach.
Secondary Target: One creature other than the primary target
Secondary Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] damage.
Special: If your primary attack with this power reduced the target to 0 hit points or fewer, a hit with this secondary attack deals 4[W] damage on a hit instead.

About the Author

Ari Marmell has been shirking homework in favor of playing the D&D® game since he was nine years old. Thankfully, he now works in the industry, since shirking work for gaming tends to wreak havoc with the bills. He has written for quite a few of the industry's major companies, including White Wolf and, of course, Wizards of the Coast.

Masters of the Planes

by Robert J. Schwalb
Illustrations by William O'Connor

From liquid lightning geysers erupting in the shifting fields of elemental earth to the brilliant radiance bathing Mount Celestia and its immortal inhabitants, to Sigil's twisting streets and countless doorways, to the stinking bog surrounding Gloomwrought in the Shadowfell, the planes are home to staggering vistas, astonishing beauty, and unhinging hideousness. Most mortals find the planes beyond their reach, making them places of legend or myth, but for adventurers, a journey into the Feywild or Shadowfell is just a portal trip away, and those with the courage to step beyond the bounds of their reality find wonders aplenty, evil beyond description, and adventure enough to consume a lifetime.

Provided they have the means, nothing prevents adventurers of any tier from exploring the planes' many wonders, but some regions are too dangerous and too awful for any but the greatest heroes to brave. Epic adventurers have little to fear from the Nine Hells or Celestia, and they can prowl the Darklands of the Shadowfell with impunity, attend the archfey's courts in the Feywild, and even descend into the Abyss to do battle with demon princes and thwart their hideous machinations. Many epic heroes regard such ventures as steps on their personal quests to meet a destiny unrelated to the planes, but a few see the planes and their inhabitants as ends in their own right and one day will claim their places among its most powerful denizens.

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To this end, this article presents a selection of epic destinies related to the planes so that epic heroes with an interest in planar exploration have new fates from which to choose. With these destinies, a hero might forge an Astral dominion, serve as the gods' hand of vengeance, rule the Shadowfell as a Darklord, or transcend their mortal roots and transform into a terrible primordial entity. As with other epic destinies, the fulfillment of the final quest acts as the necessary catalyst to transition the character from being a mortal hero to something more. Although many epic destinies move characters into the realm of legend, their names whispered forever after for their accomplishments and adventures, planar epic destinies preserve these characters and their place in the campaign setting, so they can continue to interact with the larger cosmos, becoming terrible nemeses or great allies to the next generation of planeswalkers.

DARKLORD

The Shadowfell wraps you in its chilling embrace, welcoming you as a lord and master of any realm you choose.

Prerequisite: 21st level

Some say that the Shadowfell reflects darkly the mortal world and is an imperfect echo of that realm suspended in reality's heart. Where others fear the unexpected twists, the deep shadows, and the scuttling creatures that emerge from hiding only in the darkest of nights, you embrace it all, feeling at home in the plane's pervasive chill and gloomy ambience. Perhaps your comfort grows from familiarity; you might have been born in the Shadowfell, perhaps as a shadar-kai, or another race who settled here, and, as a result, you come to see other worlds as being too bright and too garish to trust completely. Or, you might find the Shadowfell mirroring your own dark and brooding nature, especially if you are obsessed with death and dark magic. Regardless of the reasons for your unhealthy obsession with shadow, the kinship you experience blossoms into something more as the Shadowfell reciprocates your affection and blesses you with its power.

The Shadowfell isn't free with its gifts and only gradually infuses you based on your achievements and successes. As you prove your worth, you find yourself changing, embracing the cool darkness and rejecting the bright radiance of the sun. You become withdrawn and cold, even to your closest comrades, while your connections to the Shadowfell strengthen. Dark impulses might breed darker acts, but there is nothing to fear: The Shadowfell chose you to become its steward, and should you accept, your immortality is ensured.

Although the Darklord is available to characters of any class, strikers and controllers are best suited to its features and power.

Immortality

You claim your place as master of the Shadowfell, a dark and mysterious figure of uncertain loyalties commanding a region in the Shadowfell as absolute ruler, monarch of night, and prince of darkness.

Shadow's Price: Your interests in the Shadowfell have only grown over your long career and in return, you learn to tap into its grim power to augment your other capabilities. Dabbling in dark forces exacts a dread price from you, for you have paled and grown thin—the cost of embracing the darkness.

During the last conflict with your enemy, you pulled out all the stops, using every tool at your disposal to win the day, but in doing so, you cemented the Shadowfell's hold over your soul. When the battle ends, as your achievements begin to sink in, mist wells up from the ground around you in silvery tendrils, each wrapping chill fingers around your legs, crawling up your torso until it shrouds you completely. As quickly as the mists appeared, though, so do they vanish and when they do, they take you with them.

The Shadowfell's price is to stake a claim on your soul and to demand you spend eternity as a Darklord, a ruler of the gloomy plane. The plane manifests a realm suited to your accomplishments and failures, producing a darkly twisted realm that for you is both frightening and comforting, and that reflects all that you have done as a mortal and laying the foundation for what you will do as an immortal. Thus you spend the remainder of your days as an architect of good or evil as you decide.

Darklord Features

All Darklords have the following class features.

Stand in Two Worlds (21st level): Once per day, you can use either the Planar Portal ritual or the Shadow Walk ritual without expending components, even if you do not have the Ritual Caster feat. If you use the Planar Portal ritual, you must travel to the Shadowfell, or back to the natural world if you are already in the Shadowfell.

Return from the Shadowfell (24th level): Once per day, when you die, your spirit can freely cross the veil from the Shadowfell and return to life with the blessings of the Raven Queen. At the start of your next turn, you manifest a new body (destroying your corpse, if it is still present) with all the items that were on your corpse and appear standing in the space where you died. You immediately heal to full hit points and can continue fighting as normal.

The Shadowfell clings to your new body for a short while as well. You gain concealment from all targets and gain the phasing quality. At the end of the encounter, you lose the last remnants of the Shadowfell clinging to your body, no longer gaining concealment or phasing as a result of this ability.

Thrall in Death (30th level): Such is your mastery over the Shadowfell that whenever you kill a foe

you can cause that enemy to rise from death. Whenever you reduce a target to 0 or fewer hit points, at the start of your next turn, the enemy automatically stands in the square in which it died with 1 hit point. The target is dominated by you until the end of the encounter, at which point it is destroyed.

Darklord Power

Shadow Stride Darklord Utility 26

Shadows envelop you, spiriting you off to another location.

Daily ✦ Illusion, Shadow, Teleportation
Move Action **Personal**

Effect: You can teleport 20 squares. When you appear in your destination square, you are invisible until the end of the encounter or until you are hit by an attack.

KEYBEARER

You hold the keys to reality, and with them, you can go anywhere you desire.

Prerequisite: 21st level

The universe is yours to explore. You are a master of travel who can slip through the planes and cross through time and space to traverse vast distances in the blink of an eye. No locks can stop you, and no barrier can block you for you have reality's keys and with them, you can go anywhere you like as often as you wish.

The keys are a metaphor for your unique insight into reality's architecture. Your keen insight allows you to identify holes in the cosmos's fabric and with slight concentration, you can step through them to bypass obstacles, appear miles away, or emerge in an entirely different plane. Your first breakthrough might have come early in your career, when you first used a Linked Portal or another travel ritual. Or it could have arisen from your experimentation with spells, prayers, or other powers you have mastered. These revelations laid the foundation for the evolving abilities you come to master, but also instilled a powerful urge to travel and explore, to visit new realms, explore distant planes, and meet peoples and societies alien from your own.

Immortality

The cosmos opens its doors to you, inviting you into the remotest corners of reality. It's not a question of how or when you travel, but where do you want to go?

Master of Time and Space: Yours has been a life of exploration, traveling to the farthest reaches of reality and back again. You've beheld wondrous vistas, watched residuum storms raging across the Feywild, explored the City of Brass's gleaming streets, and wandered through Sigil's innumerable portals. Each time you embarked on a new journey, you began to realize that the mechanisms and arcane formulae used in travel rituals were imperfect methods for movement, since they were overly complex systems that exacted an unnecessary price. These potent rituals only touched the possibilities for travel, providing the crudest and most direct means to reach your destination. Through refinement and exploiting the pathways worming through reality, you could speed up the process and make it more elegant so that you could go anywhere you liked.

This understanding proved instrumental in your victory over your final adversary. With the enemy brought low, and your quest completed, you are free to devote your full time and attention to exploring the planes, and not long after, you say your goodbyes and put your knowledge to the test. As you refine your techniques, you find you no longer need the complexities of ritual magic to facilitate your exploration; you can simply go where you want, when you want. Eventually, you discover the very threads of time, which allows you to move into the future and into the past.

Being able to traverse the currents of time means you can effectively live forever, journeying to all times and places. You might race backward into history to witness the rise and fall of Bael Turath, or go further to behold the horrors of creation's war between the gods and primordials. Or, you might move ahead, stepping into the uncertain future to see the repercussions of your mortal actions, the ascent of new champions, new wars, new innovations, and more until the world you left behind becomes a dim memory. If you drift into the past, will you seek to change it or preserve it from other Keybearers? If you go into the future, will you return to the present to change it? Only you can decide as master of time and space.

Keybearer Features

All Keybearers have the following class features.

Portal Mastery (21st level): Once per day, you can use either the Linked Portal ritual or the Planar Portal ritual without expending components, even if you do not have the Ritual Caster feat.

Additionally, once per day, when you die, you immediately regain half of your hit points and disappear; you immediately reappear on any plane in any permanent teleportation circle whose sigil sequence you have memorized.

Traveler's Tricks (24th level): Anytime you roll an 18 or higher when making an attack roll, you can teleport 5 squares as a free action after the attack.

Unfettered Passage (30th level): You gain phasing. You ignore difficult terrain and can move through obstacles and other creatures, but you must end your movement in an unoccupied space.

Keybearer Power

Reality Distortion Keybearer Utility 26

By folding time and space, you create a rippling area of distortion with unpredictable effects.

Daily ✦ Zone
Standard Action **Close** burst 3
Target: Each enemy in burst
Effect: The burst creates a zone of bent space that lasts until the end of your next turn. While you remain within the zone, each turn, you gain an extra move action.
Whenever a creature other than you starts its turn within the zone, roll 1d6 to determine what happens.
1—The target blinks out of existence until the start of its next turn. When it reappears, it returns to the space it left or the closest available space.
2—The target is dazed and immobilized until the start of its next turn.
3—The target is slowed and weakened until the start of its next turn.
4—The target gains vulnerable 15 to all attacks until the start of its next turn.
5—The target grants combat advantage to all targets and takes a -5 penalty to all saving throws until the start of its next turn.
6—The target blinks out of existence until the start of its next turn. When it reappears, it returns to the space it left or the closest available space.
Sustain Standard: The zone persists until the end of your next turn. When you move, the zone moves with you, keeping you at its center.

PLANESHAPER

From nothing comes something, a dominion shaped by your mind and will.

Prerequisite: 21st level

The dominions are stars in the firmament of the Astral Sea and each houses a fantastic world that evolved first from a seed of a concept and eventually blossomed into a unique world reflecting the vision and imagination from which it was spawned. Though many dominions are in the Astral Sea, others wait to take shape and join those already drifting through the silvery void. You have discovered one of these unformed realms and it's up to you to decide what form it will take.

The astral seed's evolution is slow, gradually expanding and transforming in response to your guidance. You cannot rush its formation or it will rip apart and dissolve into the silvery mists. You must also learn to hone your craft so you can develop the precision needed to sculpt the realm properly. Having the ability to create and alter the nature of this dominion in the making breeds other talents that transcend your mastery over the Astral Sea, and you bring these abilities to bear no matter where you go. You, however, apprehend these forces of creation, at first through subtle manipulation, but eventually through an unnerving mastery and ease foreshadowing your coming greatness.

Immortality

Though malleable in your hands, the world proves too limiting to one of your stature and talent, and so you transcend your origins to embrace your destiny.

Master of Reality: From the moment you discovered the astral seed, you have spent a measure of your time and energy to crafting this realm. Although you and a few allies eventually became able to explore the product of your work, it isn't until you complete your final quest that the growing realm awakens into a full-blown dominion—an Astral realm and haven for you and any you permit to walk its lands. With your refuge ready, you gather your things and slip through the planes to bring about its final form, raising mountains, forming seas, and welcoming those creatures you like to share in its splendor for as long as they wish to remain.

Being the master of your own realm and having complete control over its nature finds you distancing yourself from your roots. The squabbles between kingdoms, the rise and fall of empires, and the drama of ordinary people are insignificant next to the power you wield and the concerns facing you with

maintaining your ever-growing dominion. Moreover, maintaining your dominion takes work and consumes much of your attention until your forays outside your realm become fewer and fewer and until you find yourself unwilling to leave the paradise you create. In your final days, you bind your soul to the realm to preserve it forever after and thus your immortality is ensured as a testament of your imagination.

Planeshaper Features

All Planeshapers have the following class features.

Ultimate Adaptation (21st level): You increase your Intelligence by 2, and after an extended rest you can choose one encounter power. You can use that encounter power twice per encounter. When you take another extended rest, you can choose a different encounter power.

Astral Critical (24th level): Whenever you score a critical hit against an enemy, you can choose to also remove the enemy from play by sending it to your astral seed. The target vanishes from its space and reappears at the start of your next turn.

Shape Reality (30th level): Your transcendent understanding of the universe empowers you with the ability to bend and warp your environment. You gain an aura 10 that allows you to reshape reality as you see fit. Once during each of your turns, you can alter the environment in any of the following ways by spending a minor action:

✦ Change the temperature. Creatures that start their turns within your aura automatically take 15 cold damage or 15 fire damage (your choice). You can spend another minor action to return the temperature to normal, eliminating this damaging effect.

✦ Permanently transform any squares of difficult terrain within your aura into normal terrain.

✦ Permanently transform any squares of normal terrain within your aura into difficult terrain.

✦ Create breathable air in any or all squares.

✦ Fill 9 unoccupied squares with a solid surface, such as stone or wood. If you fill a square with a solid surface that is not attached to another surface (in other words, you create a stone slab 5 squares up in the air), the surface hovers in place.

Planeshaper Power

Planar Refuge **Planeshaper Utility 26**

You whisk yourself and all your allies to the astral seed that will one day become your dominion.

Daily ✦ Teleportation
Standard Action **Close** burst 5
Target: You and each willing ally in burst
Effect: You and any targets teleport from your current space and appear in your astral seed. You and your allies can each spend a healing surge and recharge one encounter power. At the start of your next turn, you and all allies reappear in the space you vacated or the closest unoccupied space.

Prince of Hell

Better to rule in hell, than to serve in heaven.

Prerequisite: 21st level

One way or another, you're going to Hell. The reasons are many. You might have drawn the fell attention of an archdevil who seeks to name you as its heir. You might have made an unwise bargain, selling your soul in exchange for temporal power. Or you could be a devil's lost scion, only now realizing your heritage's full potential. It might not be fair and could be a gross injustice, but you can't change fate. Your place lies within the fiery dominion and only by accepting your destiny can you use it to your advantage.

Undoubtedly, your curse (or blessing) has manifested itself in omens and the behavior of those you meet. Babies cry, animals grow uneasy, and your eyes have a tendency to flash red when you're angry, all pointing toward darkness in your blood. Consultations with seers and soothsayers offer glimpses of what's in store for you, including grim warnings of plots and treacheries fomented by hidden rivals and enemy archdevils who fear your ascent. Indeed, the emergence of a new archdevil comes at a price to those who hold their own kingdoms in the Nine Hells, and none are willing to surrender their might to an upstart mortal. As a result, enemies lay in wait to all sides, plotting and conniving to bring about your downfall.

Contrary to what you might expect, you don't have to be evil to rule in the Nine Hells, though being all dark and nasty goes far to making sure you hold onto what you take. Anyone with a firm hand can claim a place in the infernal realms, and maybe, just maybe, change the dominion in a small way, at least until the Lord of Nessus smacks you down.

Immortality

There are many paths to joining the archdevils' ranks, and they include murder, betrayal, treachery, and everything in between. The following describes one possible route to a palace overlooking a sea of fire.

Infernal Apotheosis: Knowing what's in store for you, you spent your career working to secure a place of power within the Nine Hells' hierarchy. You might take a hand in infernal politics, moving through mortal spheres to pit the archdevils and their dukes against one another, or you might wage war against a particular archdevil, vowing to end the dark lord's evil regime. Regardless of the method, your final enemy's defeat brings about the appointed hour and your time in the mortal world is at an end.

For your efforts, Asmodeus summons you to his grim palace in a puff of brimstone smoke. The Lord of Nessus demands your fealty, compelling you to intone the blasphemous oaths of service whether you want

to or not. In recognition for your mortal deeds, you are awarded a domain within the Nine Hells, perhaps as a vassal to another archdevil or replacing an archdevil as a lord of Hell, gaining its lands, vassals, and armies to use as you wish.

You ascent is not without its peril. Hidden enemies plot against you, while you might find it hard to stomp out old loyalties to the one you supplanted. As well, the devils are ever working against one another, each casting hungry eyes at their peer's lands. In theory, you will live forever as an immortal steward of a brooding land, but some are ready to slip a knife in your back or send armies to shatter your legions. At any time, another ambitious fool with designs on your demesne might be prepared to use the luck and favor granted by the same dread forces that raised you up.

Prince of Hell Features

All Princes of Hell have the following class features.

Infernal Form (21st level): Destiny's weight presses upon you and you begin the subtle transformation into a devil. Apply the following changes:

- ✦ You increase your Charisma by 2.
- ✦ If you do not already have darkvision, you gain it.
- ✦ Your origin changes to immortal if it isn't immortal already.
- ✦ Gain resist fire 20 + one-half level.

Hellfire Master (24th level): Your attack powers with the fire keyword ignore resist fire. Additionally, you can choose one encounter power; if that power does not already have the fire keyword, it gains it. If that power deals damage of a certain type (cold, lightning, necrotic, and so on) then the power instead deals fire and that type of damage (fire and cold, fire and lightning, fire and necrotic, and so on). After a short rest, you can choose a different encounter power to gain this benefit.

Brimstone Step (30th level): You gain a teleport speed of 5. All creatures adjacent to you when you teleport away take 10 fire damage.

Prince of Hell Powers

Infernal Allies — **Prince of Hell Utility 26**

When the brimstone smoke clears, a unti of devils awaits your command.

Daily
Standard Action **Close** burst 3

Effect: You call forth four legion devil legionnaires (*MM* 64), each appearing in an unoccupied you choose within the burst. These devils act according to your orders (free action) on your initiative count, and they gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls as long as you are conscious and alive. Each devil remains until it is killed, until you dismiss it (a free action), or until the end of the encounter.

Punisher of the Gods

You are a vessel of endings, a bringer of dooms, and eraser of fates.

Prerequisite: 21st level

Destruction swirls around you, and death dogs your steps. You are a harbinger of endings, a bringer of doom, the breaker of bonds, the destroyer, the killer, the divine hand of death, and the ultimate slayer. Blood fills your footsteps, and a thousand screaming souls rage in your wake. It is almost an unbearable burden, this task set before you; your duty is to seek out and destroy those who would oppose the gods and their will.

The choice to become a Punisher of the Gods was never yours to make; the gods themselves choose you for this task, naming you enemy of their enemies

and their dealer of death. You are not sworn to any one god, but rather you serve them all, good and evil, as well as those who choose not to take a stand one way or the other. You were chosen because you have an unshakeable resolve and a drive that helps you see more victories than defeats, and through your achievements, you now have the chance for immortality.

Immortality

You drew the attention of not just one god, but all of them. Perhaps they fear you or seek to control you. Maybe they hope to channel your destructive energy

for another purpose, but whatever their motives, should you accept the burden they lay on you, your immortality is assured.

Hand of Vengeance: You're not the forgiving type; you don't let affronts go unpunished. When someone crosses you, you carry a grudge until you give them what they gave, sevenfold. In your line of work, this frequently means your hands are bloody from the merciless slaughter of those who stood against you in an orgy of death. The killing doesn't bother you in the slightest, because it's what you do and who you are.

Long success in the killing business earned a few nods of approval from the movers and shakers in the universe, and probably a few nasty encounters with a god, primordial, archfey, or another power with an axe to grind against you. By the time you grab the gods' attention, you've accumulated so many enemies that you have a hard time going anywhere without facing another fight.

Through all your adventures, you've had the feeling you've been doing work for a greater purpose and fulfilling a grand design as laid out by a higher power or powers. What at first seemed as dishing out payback became something more—something almost holy. The revelation crystallizes when you dispatch the last villain, a horrible wretch whose death was long overdue, because the gods send their aspects to congratulate you on your accomplishment. Such is your success, they bequeath onto you the punisher's mantle, naming you their hand of vengeance and dispenser of divine justice. To you it falls to seek out and destroy those mortals who would threaten the gods and their creation, whether it be primordial, demon prince, or even another god. In exchange for your service, you win a place among the gods, free to move through the cosmos and attend the divine courts of your masters as a favored servant, and, perhaps eventually, as a valued peer.

Punisher of the Gods Features

All Punishers of the Gods have the following class features.

Immortal Curse (21st level): You gain the *immortal curse* power.

Immortal Curse Punisher of the Gods Feature

You place a curse of death upon your enemy—a sign that immortality is at an end.

Encounter
Free Action **Close** burst 10
Target: One nonminion creature you just damaged.
Effect: Whenever you score a critical hit against the target of your *immortal curse*, you gain 1 action point. You must use this action point before the end of your next turn, and doing so does not count toward the once per encounter restriction on spending action points. This effect lasts until the end of the encounter or until the target drops to 0 hit points, at which point you regain the use of this power.

Devourer of Fate (24th level): You gain a +5 bonus to saving throws against effects that a save can end that are caused by the target of your *immortal curse*. Additionally, when the target of your *immortal curse* makes an attack that could reduce you to 0 hit points or fewer, you can make a saving throw; if this saving throw succeeds, you reduce the damage from that attack to 0 points of damage and can spend a healing surge.

Bringer of Dooms (30th level): You deal maximum damage when you hit the target of your *immortal curse*.

Punisher of the Gods Power

Repel Legions Punisher of the Gods Utility 26

You force back the legions or your enemy, which allows you to focus your ire on the one you came to slay.

Daily ✦ Necrotic, Radiant, Zone
Standard Action **Close** burst 3
Target: Each enemy in burst
Effect: The burst creates a zone of destruction and repulsion that lasts until the end of your next turn. An enemy that starts its turn within the zone takes 15 radiant and necrotic damage and is pushed 3 squares away from you. If an enemy starts its turn within the zone and ends its turn adjacent to you, you can push that enemy 5 squares as a free action.
Sustain Minor: The zone persists until the end of your next turn. When you move, the zone moves with you, keeping you at its center.

Storm Sovereign

You are the storm of vengeance—the manifestation of the Elemental Chaos's raw destructive potential.

Prerequisite: 21st level

You are the scion of storms, the master of thunder and lightning, and a prince of the Elemental Chaos. Others are like you—others who feel an uncommon bond with the elemental forces who spawned the world and who harbor a measure of elemental power within them. Some don't yet realize the fate in store for them, while others might never attain their potential, but you are different, because your eyes crackle with lightning, your hair stirs as if in a breeze, and your voice thunders. The primordial heirs, as some might call you and those like you, might find comfort in the mountain heights or in the ocean's deeps, but your connection is within the savage storm and those

blistering explosions of wind and rain, of blinding lightning and deafening thunder—storms in which you feel truly free and your purpose never more clear.

As you come to know your place in the wider world, you connections to mortal creatures strains. Your home is not among the civilized cities or in the darkened wilds, but it is in the sea of possibility that is the Elemental Chaos. You seek to dance through drifting motes of boiling earth, to lash seas of fire with your rains, and to destroy any who do not kneel before you. Only your purpose can hold back these wild impulses, and only your sense of duty and the burden of responsibility can ground you. One day, though, you'll escape and embrace the nature you have long suppressed.

Immortality

The primordial spirit rages against your self-imposed bonds. It will be free and when it does escape, you had better put distance between yourself and the world.

Primordial Power: Long have you endured the suffering caused by the angry presence inside you. You have fought back the unnatural urgings to destroy and rage, testing the limits of your self-control. In the final battle against your last foe, you nearly slipped and unleashed the primordial entity onto the world and only through a supreme act of discipline did you retain control of yourself.

When the dust settled, you knew you could confine the monster no longer and that it would soon break through your flesh and awaken, bringing utter ruin to everything around you. Knowing the only place you could loose the primordial without fear of the consequences, you quit the mortal world to seek out the Elemental Chaos. Far from any living creature, you relaxed yourself, surrendering your body and soul to the primordial, allowing it to unleash the storm's fury.

You thought this would mean your annihilation, and in a way, the freeing did end your life, but your consciousness lives on by merging with the elemental entity, to give a mind to the mindless storm, and life to the personification of violence. Thus do you become a new primordial—a master of the elements and agent of creation and destruction—and thus do you fade from the world to emerge as a great power in the Elemental Chaos.

Storm Sovereign Features

All Storm Sovereigns have the following class features.

Stormborn (21st level): You increase your Constitution score by 2 and your origin changes to elemental. Additionally, you gain resist lightning and thunder equal to 15 + one-half your level.

Thunder and Lightning (24th level): Once per day, when you die, your body discorporates into a storm of elemental fury. You heal to one-half hit points and gain the insubstantial and phasing qualities. You gain an aura 5, and when enemies begin their turns inside that aura they automatically take 15 lightning and thunder damage, and you can slide that enemy 3 squares. You can use encounter and at-will powers, but you cannot use daily powers, activate magic items, or perform rituals. If you die in elemental storm form, you are dead.

At the end of the encounter, after a short rest, you reconstitute yourself from the base elements. Your current hit point total is unchanged, but you no longer experience the other benefits and drawbacks from being in elemental storm form.

Cyclone's Master (30th level): You gain a fly speed equal to your speed + 2 and can hover. You do not need to land at the end of your movement. Additionally, you gain an aura 5; any creature that enters or begins its turn within your aura loses any resistance to lightning or thunder. Whenever you deal damage with an attack, you can choose to have the attack deal lightning or thunder damage instead of its normal damage.

Storm Sovereign Powers

Scion of Chaos — Storm Sovereign Utility 26

You twist fate as the storms of disjunction coil through the Elemental Chaos.

Daily
Immediate Interrupt **Close** burst 5
Trigger: An enemy makes an attack against you.
Effect: You choose a new target for the attack, which must be within the burst and the reach or range of the attack. Additionally, the attack roll for that attack is now considered to be a natural 20, regardless of what the original roll was.

Winter Sovereign

Snow and ice are your servants, for you are winter's ruler.

Prerequisites: 21st level; fey origin

The greatest forces in the Feywild are the archfey, who are powerful and wise custodians of the bright echo, and sovereigns over the wild and free spirits dwelling in these lands. Each archfey governs an aspect of the Feywild, laying claim to the mountains, the forests, the Feydark, or even the seasons themselves. Your life's work places you on the path to join this august society by transcending mortality and becoming an immortal guardian of the Feywild. Your future role could be anything, but your fate is to become the Winter Sovereign.

The moment you realized the life you would one day lead, you have bent your efforts to understanding the Feywild and its denizens, while also working to master the elements you will have to wield. You might study under the current Winter Sovereign, or you might secretly work to usurp the role, leaching power from your rival for the fateful moment when you supplant the monarch and stake your claim to the

dark season. However you go about learning your role, your mastery over winter's power only grows.

Immortality

Although winter dies and gives way to spring, one knows spring surrenders to summer, which itself must bow before autumn. In the end, winter always returns.

Passage of the Seasons: The final test comes when you confront your nemesis. In defeating the foe, you earn your right to become the next Winter Sovereign and your court awaits you in the Feywild. You abandon the mortal world soon after your victory, plunging into the Feywild just as autumn dies and winter's chill comes on the northern winds. Instinctively, you know where your ice palace waits. You cross through the Feywild, as autumn's servants bow to your newfound authority, and when you find the grand citadel, you accept winter's coronet and begin your reign as winter's ruler.

As an archfey, you command those loyal to winter, governing and sheltering them from your enemies. Your strength waxes and wanes with the seasons' passage, growing stronger as summer turns to autumn, and coming into your full potential when winter takes hold, only to wane as the days lengthen, ice recedes, and the snows melt. This cycle grants you immortality, erasing the effects of time each year when winter's touch falls across the lands. And thus you rule for as long as you want until you are ready to pass the crown to your heir and leave all worlds for all time.

Winter Sovereign Features

All Rulers of Winter have the following class features.

Lingering Cold (21st level): When you hit a target with a cold attack, it loses its resistance to cold (if any) until the end of your next turn. In addition, enemies you hit with attack powers that have the cold keyword take a –5 penalty to saving throws made to end any effects these powers create. Each time an enemy fails a saving throw to end one of these effects, that enemy gains vulnerable cold 15 until the end of your next turn.

Winter's Bite (24th level): You choose one daily power; if that power does not already have the cold keyword, it gains it. If that power deals damage of a certain type (fire, lightning, necrotic, and so on) then the power instead deals cold and that type of damage (cold and fire, cold and lightning, cold and necrotic, and so on). After a short rest, you can choose a different daily power to gain this benefit. Furthermore, whenever you hit at least one target with power that has cold keyword, you can teleport 5 squares as a minor action until the end of your next turn.

Frozen in Ice (30th level): Once per day, when a creature fails a saving throw against an effect you caused with a power with the cold keyword, as a free action you make the target restrained (save ends). If that target then fails to save against the restrained condition, it is instead petrified (the target is frozen in ice instead of turned to stone, but all other effects of the petrified condition remain).

Winter Sovereign Powers

Rime Armor — **Winter Sovereign Utility 26**

Ice crystals spread across your body, embracing you in their cold caress.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Cold
Standard Action **Personal**

Effect: You gain immune cold and a +10 power bonus to AC. Each time an enemy attacks you, reduce the power bonus by 1 (by 2 if the attack has the fire keyword). Any time an enemy hits you with a melee attack, the enemy takes 20 cold damage and is slowed until the end of your next turn. This effect lasts until the power bonus falls to +0 or until the end of the encounter.

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb has contributed design to such books as the *Forgotten Realms® Player's Guide, Draconomicon™ I: Chromatic Dragons, Manual of the Planes®, P2: Demon Queen's Enclave™, Martial Power™, Player's Handbook® 2, Eberron® Campaign Guide, Eberron Player's Guide, Divine Power™,* as well as numerous articles for *D&D Insider™*. Robert lives in Tennessee.

Backdrop: Tarmalune

by Ed Greenwood

Illustrations by Drew Baker
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Tarmalune, the wealthy, bustling, crossroads port city, is the cosmopolitan trading heart of its continent, serving Returned Abeir just as Waterdeep does the Sword Coast of Faerûn.

Self-governing and fiercely independent, yet lacking a standing army, Tarmalune is the largest, wealthiest, and most socially prominent of the Windrise Ports (the independent cities on the eastern shores of the Dragon Sea). Only Imdolphyn dares to declare itself "the equal of Tarmalune," and not even the richest Imdarm merchant-lords truly believe that boast.

Tarmalune has around 70,000 permanent residents (called "Tarralune"), and it hosts a constantly changing population of many more short-term visitors as ships dock or sail, caravans arrive or depart, and a steady stream of peddlers, traders, and seekers-after-fortune pass through its gates. Of old, the city was rightly called "Tarmalune Great Port" since it rivals Waterdeep in wealth, mercantile ventures, tolerance, variety among citizens and outlanders, and constantly unfolding opportunities.

Tarmalune is not a welcoming home to those who favor stability over change, or who trust in traditions and "old ways." Each new month brings changes in fashions, ways of making things or doing business, and new faces rising to the center of attention in society, or seizing real power among Tarralune investors and traders.

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What Meets the Eye

Tarmalune is a city of energetic activity, movement, and noise that grows muted in fogs and by night, but never really ceases.

Its cobbled streets are broad (enough to turn a coach or cart without unhitching its team) but are choked with wagons, carts, and folk mounted and afoot by day, and only a little less crowded by night. There are no sidewalks, and streets (rather than having a central "crown" to shed water to side gutters) slope gently down from the flanking buildings to a slimy open drainage trough running down the center of the street.

Most city houses are narrow, four-story-tall stone buildings with steeply sloped tile or slate roofs that bristle with dormers. (The fires in Tarmalune down the years have resulted in laws banning thatch or wooden shingle roofs.) Many have balconies on their third floor and higher, and several have exterior "back stairs" giving down into alleys. At the back of dwellings is a small stable. Street-level windows, and those on the floor above, are almost always equipped with stout shutters.

Shops in Tarmalune are rarely purpose-built. They occupy the ground floor of a former house, with rental "rooms" (apartment suites) above, or they share space with a building housing a cellar shop, another store at street level, and short-rent living "allrooms" (single-room dwellings) or offices above.

However, Tarmalune is a city of new ideas, and scattered throughout its wards (districts) are "different" buildings, from special shops and grand mansions to small stone towers that are nearly citadels, and architecturally strange experiments. "One can buy anything in Tarmalune," as the Abeiran saying goes, and it appears one can also build anything—or try. Building collapses are no longer frequent, but every few months one still occurs.

Tarmalune merchants are swift to import anything that appears to be selling, and to copy (or try to deceive buyers with lookalike "glims" or deceitful somewhat-copies) any newly faddish item or any popular goods they can't import. The city's shops hold just about anything, but rare or intricate wares are expensive. Common goods (such as simple foodstuffs, cloaks, and rough pots) are plentiful and cheap, but expect to search and pay much for durable, comfortable, well-fitting boots.

Tarmalune is crowded and noisy, day and night. The reek of animal dung and the creaking and rumbling of carts is everpresent, the docks are always a center of shouting bustle as loading and unloading proceeds, and the streets just inland of the dock warehouses ring with smiths' hammers and other loud noises of things being made or repaired, at all hours.

Surprisingly, the stinks of rotting fish, seaweed, or sewage are mild and seldom carried far from the green, opaque harbor waters. This is thanks to abundant "suckertails" (eels, with soft sucking mouths, that eat dung and rotting things) dwelling in the harbor. Unlike lampreys, they do not bite, and they suck blood only from drowned carrion; Tarralune even keep suckertails in pools for private bathing, or plunge into the harbor to have "wild" suckertails clean them; short exposure to swarms of the sucking eels is said to be pleasant (and they drop off the moment a bather emerges from the water).

The only strong-smelling area of the city is the slum of Fishstink, where fish are sold (and gutted and cleaned for sale). Mongers hurl the innards out on the cobbles to attract shrieking, squawking gulls, which are promptly netted and clubbed or downed with hurled stones by poor children for home stewpots. This harvest that has little effect on the expanding gull population, but it cuts down on "thieving beaks" swooping at the fish stalls.

Tarmalune was once described as "jaws about to close around as much sea as they could swallow," the sea being the harbor that lies in the center of the city, serving as both its beating heart of commerce and a barrier to those seeking to cross it. The bridges over the four streams that empty into the harbor are constant crowded bottlenecks of carts, wagons, and dodging pedestrians.

A bewildering variety of small boats ferry Tarralune and visitors in all directions across the harbor (for fees ranging from 2 cp per head per trip to as much as 5 gp for a known fugitive in a desperate hurry). Only by night, and in heavy fogs (of the sort that arise at most dawns), does traffic abate enough to let the eye gaze across large expanses of open water, or someone to cross a bridge at a steady, uninterrupted pace.

The laws of Tarmalune forbid visiting ships to anchor in the harbor for more than two nights at a time, but around sixty small, battered, leaky Tarralune-owned vessels are found bobbing in its gentle swells. Their crews ply the crowded waters with fending-poles, oars, hunting horns, and curses, making the harbor noisy by day and much of the night.

In so much bustle, seeing landmarks can be a problem in parts of the city; locals use corner-site businesses (such as taverns) to navigate and to arrange meetings with others.

From huge shipbuilding sheds to the overblown "half-castles" of the wealthy, Tarmalune holds many striking buildings, but its major landmarks (aside from well-signed corner businesses, bridges, and the Raging Flame) are the two fountains located in open "squares" (spaces that are neither square in shape nor open, being crowded with unshuttered vendors' wagons by day and night) north and south of the harbor. Fairwynd Plume is on the north, in Dawnside, and Duthsummer Plume to the south, in Arendermore.

These pumped waters jet to twice the height of a tall man, are used as baths by the poor, and have several free-public-use water pumps (hand-operated, bring your own bucket) around their bases. Reselling

city water drawn from these pumps is illegal, as is taking more than four buckets per person per day.

The Raging Flame

The most striking sight in Tarmalune is the Raging Flame (the "Tongue of Fire" in more formal speech and to older Tarralune), a hundred-foot-tall pillar of tireless flames that burns constantly, in a cylinder that holds its shape even in gales, without fuel. Sailors use it as a beacon in the darkness or bad weather, since its light shines out to sea straight through the open (navigable) heart of the harbor. To Tarralune, it's something "old, fell, and magical" that's "always been there," defying all attempts to extinguish it and seeming to know and strike out at persons who try (spitting gouts of flame for hundreds of feet that appear aimed at specific persons or buildings).

Hundreds of local tales, tall and otherwise, speak of this pillar of flame. Sometimes it features as an instrument of revenge, or it is portrayed as a fell monster harming those it dislikes and aiding those it favors. Some stories claim dueling wizards were transformed into it and are trapped within it even now; others insist it snatches and captures all manner of persons, transforming them into tormented flames and growing with each one it adds; and still other tales whisper that it's used for sacrifices by dark cults who will one day rule all Tarmalune—cults perhaps based in Imdolphyn or other ports, who "seek to bring the Great Port down."

There is almost universal agreement in the city that the fires that have broken out in the past are somehow the work of the Raging Flame, no matter how distant they were from the site of the fiery pillar. Most Tarralune also agree that without the watchful mages of the recently established Firequench Order keeping the Raging Flame in check, more fires would have devastated Tarmalune, or "a greater evil would have erupted in our fair city."

Getting In and Out of Tarmalune

Tarmalune lacked a city wall or gates until just two years previous, but there are no tolls for arriving in the city or departing it.

Docking in the Harbor

There are, however, harbor docking fees. All non-city-registered vessels are subject to a 2 gp amount, paid to the "master" of that dock (a city official who will typically be waiting for the ship to "land") promptly upon tying up at any city dock. Another 2 gp must be paid at dawn of every day thereafter that the ship remains docked. (Ship captains who seek to avoid payment by untying from the dock "stumps" (bollards) to let their ship drift will be charged a triple toll, thanks to the damage done in the past in harbor collisions.)

Road Patrols

Although there are no formal restrictions on entry and departure by land, merchants who seek to ride or take carts or wagons into and out of Tarmalune after dark discover that all roads are watched by a dozen armed patrols of Vigilants (the city police; see "Power in the City," hereafter), who question and perhaps search saddlebags and conveyances (to cut down on kidnappings, thievery, and the smuggling of weapons and large amounts of currency). Some patrol masters can be bribed to "forget" to search, but most cannot. Suspicious goods are seized and the persons carrying them jailed for questioning, and if the patrol finds nothing but remains suspicious, the travelers are turned back and told to resume journeying "when the sun is high and clear."

Similar patrols operate by day, of course, but the flood of traffic is so intense that only overtly suspicious travelers are stopped.

Cargo Taxes

The city does not tax shop sales or goods carried by wagon, afoot, or by pack-animal, but they do tax "landed" (unloaded) ship cargos. Black-uniformed dockside city inspectors (known as "ravens") levy these taxes after they inspect the amount and type of goods and then issue paper chits to be presented at Haven Towers within seven days with payment (upon pain of seizure of other goods in lieu). The inspector retains an identical copy of every chit to make sure no issued chit is simply "forgotten." To harm or hamper an inspector is to risk imprisonment, seizure of all goods and city properties, and exile from the city; also, if an inspector suffers an injury, an identical injury is done to the injurer.

City Life

Tarmalune is primarily a city where things are bought and sold (or traded), but it is secondarily a city where items are made or repaired, for sale or resale in new form.

Of old, as the city grew around a fine natural harbor, the primary industries were market selling, fishing, and shipbuilding. Although city markets, fishing, and shipbuilding (and ship refitting) remain as busy as ever, jobs in Tarmalune now center around shopkeeping (that is, sales in stores rather than outdoor markets) and craftwork, such as turning lumber into crates, barrels, wagons, and furniture, or turning metal bars into pots, locks, hasps, and nails.

The "rising tide" in local work and wealth right now is investment ("sponsorship" or "partnering in"), through which even a humble worker can hope for eventual wealth by partial ownership of a business concern. The word "company" is unknown in Tarmalune; the local equivalents are "tarneld" (for privately run businesses, which can accept investments but admit no votes or control over their operations by investors) and (for partnerships) "skoun." Increasingly, the largest and growing Tarralune businesses are skouns (pronounced "SKOONS").

A Place To Live

Throughout their lives, Tarralune "move lodgings" as they gain or lose wealth and prestige, but all prefer to own their homes rather than renting. (A local term for a successful citizen is one who "owns his own walls, not just the bed." However, the dream of owning buildings is forever beyond many, especially since the council outlawed joint ownership. A specific individual, not several people or a tarneld or skoun, must own a building; agreements by others to provide coins for a building purchase must be now made in secret, since it has become an illegal practice.

Long-term (citizen, as opposed to visitor) tenants rent by the year, with their tenancies customarily ending in midsummer, and such rental rooms are always above shops or offices; only those who own their homes have the luxury of having everything contained within four walls all to themselves. Rental negotiations are entirely private, but any agreement made must be written down and taken to a clerk at Haven Towers (where the council meets) to be witnessed and copied (a copy is retained in the Towers; these records are regularly used by the Vigilant to try to track down specific persons).

Tarmalune is gaining new citizens every year, and this is making housing steadily scarcer and more expensive.

Daily Meals

Successful Tarralune employ maids, "hands" (servants who see to their horses, provide personal protection, and do minor repairs and "strong jobs" such as shifting furniture), and cooks. Only the wealthy have all-hours, live-in servants; for Tarralune, their hired help arrives for part of a day to do their work and then moves on to the home or shop of another patron. It follows that the successful and wealthy can dine in clubs or "feasts" as guests at the homes of other successful Tarralune, or more often dine at home for the main evening meal (after dark, when "the shops are shut").

Less successful Tarralune, and all citizens and visitors who are moving about the city in the course of their daily business, dine in the street from "simmer wagons" (wagons that serve hot and cold food and drink) or the serving windows of bake shops, taverns, and inns, or they duck inside taverns and inns for a sit-down meals.

Sausages, hard biscuits, and stews eaten over several days (added to between meals) are a staple of Tarralune who live alone, many of whom heat up a gravy or sauce to make such "familiar swallows" more palatable.

Riding, Conveyances, and Pets

Most Tarralune hire coaches and "carry-wagons" (open-topped, high-sided cargo wagons) as needed. Due to the possibility of mistreatment, riding beasts and pack mules can't be hired, and must be bought. A few buy and sell beasts often, owning them only for short-term tasks, but most Tarralune just hire the services of carriers as they need them.

Citizens and tenants who own mounts almost always have them stabled "out back" behind their lodgings, but almost everyone who owns a wagon have wagon and draft animals kept at a "safe stables" elsewhere that sees to the guarded storage and keep of such things. Pets are a rarity in Tarmalune except among the wealthy (who keep small, easily managed exotic creatures such as lizards), but Tarralune keep a few caged chickens in their lodgings for fresh eggs (when laying ceases, the fowl end up as a meal).

1. Tarmkeep (jail, armory of the Vigilant)
2. Haven Towers (seat of civic government)
3. The Dragon's Shoulder
4. Duthsummer Plume (public fountain and pumps)
5. Dorntowers (mansion of Lord Speaker Dorn)
6. Gammurth Towers (mansion of Councilor Glarrak)
7. Windserpent House (mansion of Councilor Eldrake)
8. Stormgarde (mansion of Councilor Rathgar Malynd)
9. Halagothra's House (mansion of Halagothra the Healer)
10. Halorn House (mansion of Councilor Mhorauk)
11. Mistcloak Towers (mansion of Ildamar Yeskrel)
12. Garlgarde (mansion of "Lord" Cammas Lordlar)
13. Vaerungo's (darren)
14. Mralkyn's (inn)
15. Mokaer Morntarn's home (herbalist)
16. Anratha Harrowstorm's home (wizard)
17. Morntarn's Miracles (herbs & spices shop)
18. Harrowstorm Fine Gowns (shop)
19. Algluth's Tankard (tavern)
20. Eelspurl Water (stream)
21. Rental lodgings of the wizard Haerocloak
22. Imprel's Water (stream)
23. The Raging Flame
24. Block of burned-out buildings
25. Citadel Firequench (Order of wizards)
26. The Black Boot (inn)
27. Morlund Kalguth's (butcher)
28. Berrek Wyvernmere's home (traveling trader)
29. Josztar Gallowstern's home (traveling trader)
30. Blackhilt Water (stream)
31. Oraundo's Bench (tavern)
32. The "Tail" (harbor reach)
33. The Sardarstream (stream)
34. Askral Rheen's home (traveling trader)
35. Lothtar's Hearth (darren)
36. Fairwynd Plume (public fountain and pumps)
37. Halarskandur's Hearth (inn)
38. Galespur Towers (mansion of Glustan Belsturk)
39. Drakehawk House (mansion of Rionthas)
40. Scale Seeker House

SCM

Inns

Visitors discover that the city doesn't have all that many inns—and most are down by the docks (rough, shabby places for sailors) or just inside the city gates (quieter but still spartan accommodations). "Grand" inns are unknown, though there are two haughty and expensive ones: Halarskandur's Hearth on Slaerendevver Street, and Mralkyn's on Inglespur Lane. The most notorious of the sailors' inns is probably The Black Boot.

Taverns

Taverns, however, are everywhere in Tarmalune (and they are always sited at street-moot corners, with bold thrusting-out-over-the-street signboards). They sport such names as Algluth's Tankard, and Oraundo's Bench, and they are more than mere drinking-holes. They double as all-day eateries and business offices for many of the less wealthy and successful Tarralune entrepreneurs seeking to "hire or hire out." A tavern is the usual place to hire mercenaries or "street muscle" to "spy, defy, or use a blade."

Darren

The important everyday meeting places for wealthy or up-and-coming Tarralune with coins to spend or invest are the countless "darren" or gambling clubs. These shift constantly in popularity, with the least desirable disappearing and then reopening with new names and sponsors, and hot new places ("varth" is "hot new" in local speech) springing up constantly. The few darren popular for more than a decade include Vaerungo's on Wyndragon Way and Lothtar's Hearth on Gellart Street.

The darren serve meals and drink, but their guests don't just dine and gamble; darren are where Tarralune and visiting traders gossip, flirt, meet new business contacts ("scry new faces" is the local expression), and invest in various ventures put before them by "tarn-traders."

Tarn-Traders

Tarn-traders are independent sponsors, brokers, and hucksters (often successful former merchants who have "sold up" and retired to this life of deals, rumors, and dupes). In local speech, "tarn" is an old word for "rising wealth."

Many tarn-traders hire youths as spies and "word-runners" (message and written-contract go-betweens), and they also hire visiting adventurers as bodyguards when things get dangerous.

Of old, tarn-traders were glib, smilingly dishonest young Tarralune seeking to avoid shop drudgery or "hard hand work," or were visiting swindlers from elsewhere in Abeir, but increasingly citizens are trusting a new breed of tarn-traders: aging longtime citizens retired from shops or having sold successful tarnelds, who have coins, wisdom, and contacts enough to be successful in arranging mercantile deals for others—and who are unlikely to flee Tarmalune if things go bad, and who can therefore be held more accountable.

A few deceitful "old locals" have been murdered in recent years, and the rest have come to realize that

Tarralune have a low tolerance for being cheated by longtime neighbors.

Power in the City

Tarmalune is (loosely) ruled by the Lord Speaker of the council, wily old **Hamminas Dorn**, a good-hearted, retired adventurer who used the backing of rich, aging Tarralune traders who'd become fed up with increasing city lawlessness (arson, thefts, vandalism, and back alley gang intimidations, done by "skulks" hired by merchants warring with merchant rivals) to establish a governing council and an armed police force, the Vigilant, headed by him.

Dorn wars endlessly against defiant merchants, the usual thieves and smugglers (merchant shippers who avoid various city taxes through deception, covering an incoming cargo of something highly taxed with a layer of something taxed at a far lower rate), and council members who believe he should be their mouthpiece and nothing more.

Most Tarralune grudgingly regard their Lord Speaker as both vitally necessary and competent. Dorn wisely has been training many of his eighty-some Vigilant "trusties" to replace him as Speaker, in case a slayer's dagger ever finds his throat.

Dorn is a tall, gaunt, weathered old man with flashing eyes, bristling brows, and a voice that can thunder or cajole. He appears never to grow tired or to stop thinking ahead, and he is a consummate actor. As a rueful citizen once described him: "He could have been the greatest tarn-trader ever."

The Council of Tarmalune

The twenty-strong Council of Tarmalune is made up of merchants from a wide variety of trades. Both genders and most races are represented, but "old wealthy human males" (of two sorts: the stubborn old-money families and the aggressive self-made wealthy merchants) predominate in numbers and attitude.

The council meets every seven nights in a central hall in Haven Towers (where all its clerks and inspectors are also based, the Lord Speaker has an office, the Vigilant are headquartered, and there are lodgings for "honored guests" of the city such as visiting envoys). This hall has chairs and tables for visitors to attend, both to make representations and listen, but in practice the council members have little tolerance for hecklers, and few councilors or the wider public bother to attend meetings. Majority votes decide city policy, and controversial matters might fill the chamber, resulting in rare daytime sessions before the next regular night meeting time. This sometimes causes absent councilors to be searched for and hounded to the hall by citizens.

Most of the time, however, the majority of citizens grumble about what goes on in Haven Towers, but don't bother to visit it, shrugging at the expected "inevitable" corruption and idiotic decisions, and instead get on with their own busy lives.

At least twelve assenting council votes (the Speaker can vote) are needed to pass laws and to enact new policies requiring a change in taxation, council powers, and the rights of shopkeepers, tarnelds, and skouns.

The Court of the Council

Only three out of four councilors must vote to convict someone or reach a verdict (which might require payments or actions by both sides in a dispute) in matters of law. In other words, only four councilors must be present to judge any legal dispute, but however many councilors show up to preside, three-quarters of them must agree on a verdict, or accused parties go free.

It is rare for the council to rule on disputes that are just between two or more Tarralune (and not between the city and an individual) without passing a law or rule for everyone to follow henceforth. The council dislikes having to make such judgments, so city clerks, inspectors, and even individual Vigilant or councilors try to talk opposed sides into coming to an agreement without a court ruling, if at all possible.

Councilors don't hesitate, however, to adjudicate instances where someone is accused by the Vigilant of breaking a city law or failing to pay a required fee or tax.

No set penalties exist for any crime, and the payment of fines settles the vast majority of cases (though sometimes seizures of goods is preferred if an accused person is unable or unwilling to pay). However, imprisonment, exile, and even maiming (usually of someone who has been convicted of killing or maiming someone else) can also be "the word and will of the council." Sentences are uttered in public in the hall at Haven Towers, recorded by a city clerk, and declaimed in public at sunset of the same day by both of the city fountains. (Any citizen who wants to know any verdict rendered, no matter how long ago, can appear at Haven Towers to ask a clerk to bring out the written record; there are no restrictions or fees for this.)

No lawyers work in Tarralune, and accused persons who fail to appear in court are almost always convicted (persons in custody are brought to court by the Vigilant, because the Vigilant must take on the sentences of the accused if they prevent the accused from attending). However, a handful of "orators" hire themselves out to speak on behalf of shy, disorganized, confused, or frightened accused persons. Most of these are eloquent and are received well by councilors because they entertain and at the same time move proceedings along speedily. It is rare for orators to be hired by opposing sides and to argue against each other, and it is forbidden for the city or any councilor to hire one.

City Laws

Tarmalune has a hodge-podge of lenient and limited laws that constantly increase in number, but thus far are limited in reach. City clerks avoid bringing matters before the Court of Council where they truly believe ignorance of the law played a part in an incident, and the Vigilant (the city police) are reminded to "let Tarralune be Tarralune" rather than trying to control them through enforcement. As one councilor put it: "Even when what is about to occur is obvious, there is no such thing as an anticipated crime. They must be breaking the law, or have clearly just broken it, for you to arrest them."

The Vigilant

The police force of Tarmalune has become a model for similar forces in other Windrise Ports. It consists of at least six dozen veteran officers ("sternhelms" to all Tarralune) and an unknown number of trainees. On duty, all of them wear identical uniforms of black leather armor and boots with black metal helms, gorgets, breastplates, and backplates. In wet weather they add cloaks, and in winter, quilted cloaks.

Vigilants customarily carry short swords, belt and boot daggers, and cudgels, and they might have hidden knives, too. They are sometimes issued long wooden poles for crowd control. On the breasts of their armor, every Vigilant has emblazoned in silver the badge of the force, which is a single staring human eye surrounded by a backward "C" (points to the left rather than to the right). This symbolizes their watchfulness over the city, the reversed "C" being Tarmalune around its harbor. It is unlawful for non-Vigilants to use the badge or wear a Vigilant uniform, and exile from the city is part of any sentence for doing so.

Vigilants patrol city streets in groups of twelve (eighteen in Fishstink and dockside areas). A patrol might split into smaller groups if searching for someone or "showing watchfulness" in a busy market or during the unloading of valuable cargos, but rarely does a patrol split up in dark hours.

Vigilants begin as trainees and are covertly tested to see if they will take bribes or keep secrets from fellow Vigilants. If they "work out" after a year of street patrols with full-hire officers, they become trustswords, the basic Vigilant rank (equivalent to constable). Honest, level-headed trustswords who show leadership and are liked by their fellows are elevated to the rank of watcher (sergeant equivalent) when a vacancy becomes available. A typical street patrol is led by a senior watcher and includes a more junior watcher.

Above watchers are investigators (detective equivalents), who seldom patrol but instead command case-by-case "details" of watchers and trustswords to spy on criminals, investigate murders and mysteries, and report matters to their superiors, the wardswords.

Wardswords oversee city neighborhoods (typically four to a city ward), seeking to learn which citizens and visitors are engaged in shady pursuits, the whereabouts of all mercenaries and adventurers and what they're doing, who belongs to which gang, and what links exist between businesses, gangs, and individual criminals.

Above the wardswords are shields and senior shields, who sometimes act almost as military commanders if riots or open battles break out. They also speak (and deal) on behalf of the Vigilant with councilors and prominent citizens, and hire outsiders to conduct undercover prying, including investigations of Vigilant officers.

The Vigilants maintain spartan offices and temporary holding cells in rented street-level shops in strategic spots around the city, but anyone who is arrested for a crime (as opposed to "detained" because they're drunk, enraged and brawling, frightened and want police protection, or because officers want to question them in private) is taken to Tarmkeep, the main jail, armory, and headquarters of the Vigilant.

Tarmkeep can be seen from all over Tarmalune; it's the small, recently built fortress atop "the Dragon's Shoulder," the high, rocky ridge that runs to a point and shelters the harbor, forming the southern side of the harbor entrance. "Carted off to the Keep" is local parlance for being arrested; prisoner carts fitted with locked manacles frequently rumble to and from the Vigilant citadel.

The Vigilant ultimately report to the Lord Speaker, who is fiercely determined that they never become corrupt or seek to rule the city; he privately hires adventurers and shady Tarralune to spy on the police he founded, to make sure they "stay lawful."

Thus far he has succeeded, but the Vigilant are far too few to see even half of what goes on in the city. Where witnesses don't exist, clever and subtle criminals can readily get away with small or swift crimes.

The Haveners

Lord Speaker Dorn is determined that city officials never become the true rulers of Tarmalune, and he takes care to shift duties from one person to another, ostensibly to make everyone experienced in procurement, handling funds, and administering the "fix carts" of city workers who replace cobbles, clear streets, and see to the running of Haven Towers. He's really doing this, as everyone knows, to make sure no city official gets too friendly with criminals, councilors, or wealthy Tarralune looking to become wealthier.

Dorn has succeeded in building a staff of cordial, competent officials (mainly females, because he was swift to hire the educated but bored and jobless daughters of the wealthy) who quickly to report "every little suspicious thing" a fellow staffer does to either the Vigilant or better still Dorn, who has thus far concealed just how sick and tired he is of this behavior (because it has uncovered crimes in the past, and it

might well do so again). No Tarralune or outsider can meet privately with any city official and not have the Lord Speaker or councilors or a few senior Vigilant know about it, quickly.

At the same time, the city staff (known as "Haveners" to Tarralune) are ever more proud of the increasingly strong and efficient organization they belong to, and they work together quickly in emergencies and avoid bickering over authority or resources. Marauding adventurers, in particular, have discovered that if they try to threaten or bully Haveners or other Tarralune, or run amok with their weapons, the Haveners coordinate the Vigilant to contain and capture them—and emboldened city clerks, rather than cowering under desks, likely snatch up handy chairs or other improvised weapons to do battle, skirts flying!

Politics in Tarmalune

Outside Haven Towers in the wider city, many of the more unscrupulous traders are irked by the existence of the Vigilant and itch to rid Tarmalune of it, but Dorn enjoys the staunch support of Tarralune shopkeepers, and almost all the important workers in the city (such as the dockhands who do cargo handling between ship holds, the city docks, and the private warehouses that crowd the city). They rightfully see him as their only effective defense against citizens who have more wealth than they do.

As a result, the Vigilant remain strong (though merchants tirelessly try to corrupt the force, officer by officer), and Dorn thus far remains alive.

That does not stop councilors from working together to try to thwart the Lord Speaker's goals, or depose him and take his seat themselves, or oppose him just to curb his ever-growing influence. Even those who hate Dorn grudgingly admit he has done good things and operates with good intentions—but they speak with fear of what might befall Tarmalune if "someone evil" ever got to be Lord Speaker and wielded the power Dorn commands.

The council recently made its only universally popular decision thus far: establishing a "Firequench Order" of mages dedicated to swiftly dousing fires in the city, and controlling or eradicating the Raging Flame.

The Firequench Order

Formally the Guild of Firewatchers but now known to all Tarralune as "the Firequench Order" (and more often just "the Order"), this increasingly secretive cabal of urban mystics is now headquartered in Citadel Firequench, a basalt fortress built by a long-ago local sealord (pirate baron), then home to a succession of wealthy Tarralune, and recently used as a city jail. It faces the Raging Flame across the blackened foundations of fire-ravaged, ruined buildings that the council has ordered "never rebuilt, as long as the Flame endures."

The Order, originally a dozen named arcanists but now numbering almost twenty (including outlanders), go about cloaked and cowled in robes of purple; they wear masks beneath these outer coverings, and avoid giving their names.

To Tarralune they are heroes, because they arrive swiftly to magically extinguish fires anywhere in the city, and because they seek to quench the Raging Flame, trying spell after spell to try to tame and lessen it.

Thus far, however, their increasingly complicated rituals have been unsuccessful. The Order recently told the council privately that they have discovered the pillar of fire is sentient, is of awesome power that might be fed from elsewhere, and that they don't yet understand it well enough to destroy it; they might not know how to do so for years.

Firequench Wizard **Level 6 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 250

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +6
HP 71; **Bloodied** 35
AC 16; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18
Speed 6

Icy Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+11 vs. AC; 1d4 damage plus 1d4 cold damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the firequench wizard's next turn.

Ray of Frost (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Implement**
Ranged 10; +10 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 4 cold damage, and the target gains vulnerable 5 cold and is slowed, both until the end of the firquench wizard's next turn.

Douse (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Implement**
Area burst 2 within 10; +9 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares and knocked prone. The area is difficult terrain until the end of the firequench wizard's next turn. Normal fire is extinguished within the area. Magical conjurations and zones of fire are extinguished if the firequench mage hits with the following attack: +10 vs. the Will of the creator of the conjuration or zone.

Fireproof (minor; daily; sustain minor) ✦ **Implement**
The firequench wizard gains resist fire 10 until the end of his or her next turn. *Sustain Minor:* The resist fire 5 continues until the end of the firequench wizard's next turn.

Alignment Any **Languages** Common, Primordial
Skills Arcana +12

Str 10 (+3)	**Dex** 10 (+3)	**Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 15 (+5)	**Int** 19 (+7)	**Cha** 12 (+4)

Equipment robes, dagger, orb

City Lore

The following threads of lore are all largely true; it is up to the DM just which details are accurate.

Streetwise DC 25: In old times, the port of Tarmhaven (that grew into Tarmalune) had six ruling lords, and the descendants of these nobles still dwell in the city, most of them ignorant of their heritage but a few of them working together in secret to refound the

nobility and rise to rule Tarmalune like kings! They use the symbol of a sword thrust into the gaping jaws of a dragon, and so are called the Wyrmjaws. They are buying city buildings and councilors as swiftly as they can—and they poison all who discover too much about them.

Streetwise DC 30: Lonely old Lord Speaker Dorn has always craved love, and in vivid dreams sees a beautiful half-elf, with blue hair down to her knees, who dances in a forest glade and beckons him; he will do anything for someone promising to lead him to her.

Dungeoneering DC 15: Garlgarde, an old stone mansion in Arendermore, is shuttered and inhabited only by the crazy old merchant "Lord" Cammas Lordlar because it is haunted. Lordlar has lived for over a century because of the wraiths of Garlgarde, who keep him alive to help them guard a fabulous treasure hidden in the walls, long ago.

Dungeoneering DC 30: The Raging Flame is alive and sentient; it is what remains of a powerful ancient entity called Achazar, who is asleep or magically bound. The Firequench Order isn't trying to destroy the Flame at all; they're seeking to awaken Achazar to rule over all!

Onster Glarrak **Level 4 Elite Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 350

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +3
HP 92; **Bloodied** 46
AC 16; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 17
Resist 5 poison
Speed 6

Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+11 vs. AC; 1d4 + 1 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Spit Serpents (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**
Ranged 10; +9 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 3 poison damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Serpent Curse (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Illusion, Psychic**
Ranged 10; illusory snakes appear and attack the target; +9 vs. Will; 2d6 + 4 psychic damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage and the target is slowed (save ends both).

Snake's Quickness
Onster makes two basic attacks. If the first is a melee attack and it hits, Onster can shift 1 square.

Writhe (immediate reaction; usable when Onster is hit by a melee attack; recharges when first bloodied)
Onster shifts 3 squares and takes half damage from melee and ranged attacks until the start of his next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic
Skills Bluff +11, Diplomacy +11, Insight +8
Str 12 (+3) **Dex** 8 (+1) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 15 (+4) **Cha** 18 (+6)
Equipment leather armor, dagger

Rathgar Malynd **Level 12 Elite Soldier (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 1,400

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +7
HP 240; **Bloodied** 120
AC 28; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 24
Speed 5

Triple-Headed Flail (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+19 vs. AC; 1d10 + 8 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Rathgar's next turn.

Spiked Shield (minor 1/round; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+19 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.

Fell Spikes (standard; usable while wielding a triple-headed flail; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Close burst 1; targets enemies Rathgar can see; +17 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares. Rathgar can mark one of the targets he hits. If after being pushed the target is adjacent to one of Rathgar's allies, that ally can make a basic melee attack against the target as an immediate reaction. On a hit, the ally's basic melee attack deals 3 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Battle Hounds (free 1/round; usable when a target marked by Rathgar leaves a square adjacent to him; at-will)
Rathgar or one of his allies can shift 2 squares.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Primordial
Skills History +14, Intimidate+15, Insight +12
Str 22 (+12) **Dex** 12 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 16 (+9) **Int** 16 (+9) **Cha** 18 (+10)
Equipment plate armor, spiked shield, triple-headed flail

KEY INHABITANTS

Tarmalune is a city of energetic entrepreneurs and capable, charismatic traders. The faces and names prominent today might be supplanted swiftly by new ones tomorrow, but a handful of individuals besides the Lord Speaker have remained well known.

Loud at council is **Onster Glarrak**, a fat, unlovely human man, and wealthy energetic investor who knows many things, thinks quickly, and can deliver a telling and forceful comment or argument. Another loud member is the goodly human wizard **Tammess Eldrake**, a champion of the poor and the "honest worker," who views the doings of the Firequench Order with increasing suspicion, and the deeds and aims of a certain Rathgar Malynd (her onetime lover, who has tried to have her killed at least thrice since they parted) with cold rage.

Behind the blustering at council, much of the opposition to the authority of Lord Speaker Dorn coalesces around the powerful human warrior **Rathgar Malynd**, a "battlemaster" who runs his own mercenary company, the Battle Hounds, providing shop, home, and warehouse guards and personal security (bodyguards) to all paying Tarralune. Malynd is publicly critical of the competence of the Vigilant and the "meddling" of Dorn in what "should be what it achieved greatness through: a truly free city where no one lords it over any other, coin is king, and no one person seeks to be as grand as a dragon."

Many Tarralune fear Malynd, who is known to be ruthless in dealings with trade rivals, but he gained

favor in the city when he gave a furnished, fortified mansion (with bodyguards and servants trained, paid, and controlled by him) free to the ailing, aging, and poor local healer Halagothra after her rescue from agents of the Empress Dragon a few years ago. (Halagothra's House stands in the center of a city block in Arendermore, not far from Malynd's own fortified mansion of Stormgarde).

Halagothra the Healer is famous human in Tarmalune, and most regard her with affection and awe. A wrinkled, crotchety old woman (formerly a cook and kitchen washing-maid) who can heal by laying on hands, she tries to heal everyone brought to her, and if successful she always demands services—such as rescuing someone—rather than coin for her healings. The source of her healing ability is unknown, even to her, and all Tarmalune will rise in wrath if she's threatened or kidnapped (this has been tried over a dozen times; those responsible have always been swiftly hunted down and slain).

Ildamar Yeskrel is a tall, sardonic, handsome head of an old-money Tarralune human family, who secretly believes Tarmalune should have a nobility—and that he should be the grandest among them, and rule the city. He sponsors the Wyrmjaws secret society (see "City Lore") and tirelessly seeks to become the largest landlord in Arendermore and Dawnrise, buying at least influence over every building he can. His spies and politely, carefully trained personal trading agents are everywhere in the city, and he's not above manipulating criminals and angry merchants alike to sway the council to do things he wants them to do.

Morlgorn Rionthas is a semiretired human adventurer whose exploits won him wealth. Back in his native Tarmalune for over a decade, he now eloquently champions shopkeepers, struggling laborers, the poor, and "honest nimblehands." He also seeks to form guilds or foster informal cooperation along less wealthy Tarralune, so as to prevent councilors from becoming nobles, or the wealthy from establishing a tyrannical rule.

City Wards

The districts of Tarmalune are known as "wards" because a century ago each was separately governed by a warden. Today, they are merely neighborhoods, with formal boundaries that aren't visually apparent to the visitor. However, every Tarralune "knows" vividly what each ward is like—in local stereotypes that refuse to fade. (Despite this, almost every sort of citizen, building, and activity can be found in any ward.)

Arendermore

This is the haughtiest city ward, where the "high-cloaks" live. (Tarmalune doesn't have any formal nobles—that is, persons titled and privileged by birth—but it does have old-money wealthy families and newly risen-to-wealth merchants who crave the reputations and fawning treatment Tarralune give to "old wealth.") This district is named for the long-dead gnome builder Arender, who raised many of its magnificent turreted mansions. The descendants of his workers, who split into bitter rivals after his death, are the most skilled and busiest builders in the city today.

Dawnside

Dawnside is home to trendy, young, newly wealthy ("new-coins") Tarralune, and those desperately trying to stay young. This fashionable neighborhood is crowded with ostentatiously decorated mansions and ornate coaches, and any building not a mansion is likely to be a club for gambling, feasting, and revelry—where swindlings are frequent but gaiety and reputation-making and breaking is the order of the day. In contrast to Arendermore, where the exteriors of buildings change little but the interiors are transformed, Dawnside is where buildings are smashed down and replaced by newer, gaudier ones constantly.

Copperstreets

This district is the abode of laborers, where most of the city's shops, shopkeepers, and "nimblehands" (craft-workers) live. It's the heart of workaday Tarmalune, where "the tumbling coins that roll us all through life" are made and spent every day. It's not a slum, but everything is patched or salvaged, washing hangs out from balconies, and ornamentation is considered "overly haughty."

Maerhavel

Maerhavel is where most "successful" but not wealthy Tarralune live (such as owners of several shops, and citizens well-enough-off to retire). Many tarn-traders dwell in this ward, and it outwardly changes little. Conservative respectability and "quiet success" is the order of every day.

Fishstink

This slum is where the poorest Tarralune dwell, because only those lacking coins enough to afford more expensive lodgings elsewhere will tolerate the reek of rotting fishguts that lingers around the market stalls of the fishmongers who thrive around the outer edges of the ward. Tarralune who aren't "Stinkers" rarely dare to walk deeper into Fishstink; its interior is home to fugitives, misfits, runaways, and the maimed or shunned (those visibly monstrous or "other," who go about cloaked and cowled) who work in gangs to seize or steal coins and food, or horses and wagons that had can be traded for meals and goods.

Ward Boundaries

Arendermore consists of westernmost Tarmalune, from Tarmkeep to Duth Street, which forms its boundary with Maerhavel. In turn, Maerhavel stretches from Duth Street to the south bank of Imprel's Water (the

northernmost of the two streams entering the east side of the harbor). Fishstink then extends from the north bank of Imprel's Water to Lanternfall Lane and Drovers' Court, north of which lies Copperstreets. That ward extends west around the "Tail" (northeasternmost reach) of the harbor to the Sardarstream (westernmost of the two streams entering the north side of the harbor). Everything west of that, on the north side of the harbor, is Dawnside.

The Tarralune View

Everyone knows how Tarralune are envied and despised by folk of rival Windrise Ports—and even more fiercely by those of the Dusk Ports, who deride each other and everyone else in Abeir. Tarralune are called "those rich vipertongues," or much worse, by other Abeirans,

However, even Tarralune themselves seldom stop to consider how they regard the rest of the world around them. Yet even unthinkingly, a complicated "Tarralune view" of the Realms exists.

Born and bred citizens of Tarmalune are ambitious individualists. Family wealth, blood ties and friendships, and family-firm trading ties are all tools to be exploited if one has them, but Tarralune believe in individual achievement, and that life is "striving, always striving; there is no winning, only trying to do better, get more, and gain more power every day—more than you had yesterday."

Tarralune see the usefulness of small, secretive cabals and short-term trade alliances, and in inheritances and "family firms," but strongly prefer the entrepreneur over the lawkeeper, and the schemer over the bureaucrat.

Guilds have been founded in Tarmalune many times, and they have been smashed or have fallen apart through internal strife or the inducements of opponents just as often.

Tarralune work hard to be shrewd rather than reckless investors and venturers, but they *are* restless, "let's get at it" folk who love to trade and to outdo mercantile rivals.

This governs how folk of Tarmalune view the rest of Returned Abeir, and the wider Realms beyond. Personal attitudes vary, of course, but in general Tarmalune regard outlanders as described in the "One Resident's View" sidebar (the words are those of one Tarralune trader, Askral Rheen, but they are typical of the city's opinions).

One Resident's View

Folk of the Sword Lands and the Windrise Ports are essentially kin. They share similar values, so a Tarralune can readily understand them and ally with them. They're not as good at trade or as sophisticated as Tarralune, of course, but they're decent folk.

Those of the Dusk Ports, however, are dangerous. "Tainted in the head," even. Oh, they can trade with them, and even make coin thereby—but never turn your back on one for the blink of an eye, or it's a knife in the back. Pirates trying to hide behind smiles—that's what they are.

Eskornar, now, are backcountry louts, little better than hunters in a wilderness. Eskorn's more a forest with game trails than a real realm. One could say its folk aren't much more than snarling bears with swords. Yet Eskorn is just the sort of land a shrewd Tarralune can make coin in, and the simple Eskornar are dealt with easily enough; see to their wants and they'll settle down content long enough for the timber and furs and monster carcasses to be brought out.

Relmaur's like Eskorn, but with mountains, moors, and cold instead of forests. Marauding monsters, orcs, dragonborn and prospecting dwarves everywhere, all of them wanting you urgently dead. A good place to steer clear of until they tame it a bit and the dwarves get to squabbling among themselves. Then pick the winning side, bring out the ore-bars and gems, and one's purse will burst! Heh; easier said than made truth, as they say.

Skelkor, now, is pure poison. Stay away! There's no coin to be had out of the Empress Dragon and her slaves—nothing but grief. Even attracting her attention is a fool's act; she reached out a claw to seize Halagothra! She hires more agents than Tarralune do, or even the smugglers of the Dusk Ports, so any smiling lass one meets might be one of her talons! No sane, decent trader, no matter what the lure, will have anything to do with that dark land.

Melabrauth, most say, is little better than Skelkor—just a different dragon, jungles, and overgrown ruins instead of slaves everywhere and dragons flying over one keeping watch. Yet the daring traders of Tarmalune are exploring it right now, seeking herbs and the like they can bring back to Tarmalune to get rich. Some even worship dragon scales and the like, brought out of Melabrauth, hoping to live forever or become as mighty as dragons. One might wonder and stand undecided, yet feel the lure; this could be the next big rush of riches for all Tarmalune! Or it could just be messy deaths for a lot of Tarralune.

Fimbrul; is that even a realm at all? Frigid mountains, avalanches of snow, no roads, and hungry giants eating any trader fool enough to go there. Oh, one hears of gems as big as mens' heads and more iron than the rest of the world holds, but those're just tales. Stay away until dwarves are crowing about their mines, then wait for the dwarves to feud, as with Relmaur.

Gontal, now, is the back pouch secret—the place to make coins when the easier riches to be had in the Sword Lands and Eskorn are all gone. They hate the Dusk Port pirates, so be the safer, smiling alternative, and your purse'll thank you for it! Oh, they have their little secrets, and bear watching, but it's clear trading for now!

So now to the lands across the Great Sea—Evermeet, and Faerûn beyond. Here's where the bolder Tarralune traders step apart from the shopkeepers and drudges, who trade all sorts of wild tales about the fabled Realms Across the Sea, but know little truth, and dare few coins if any, even when a ship captain offers them only a twelfth-share, or less, in a voyage. They might have heard what's said next, but are certain of not one word of it.

So, hearken. Evermeet's all elves and forest, and best avoided; they don't want anything from us but for us to steer well clear, and really don't want to yield up any timber. If one doesn't want to end up wearing more arrows than one can count, or swallowing strange slaying magic one has no defense against, sail on to Faerûn.

Some say that continent can't be larger than that of Tarmalune's, but it is, with coins and trade enough to make this one look small—until one wades right into it and swallows deals, traders, and the lot, and starts getting fat! The near shore is what they call the Sword Coast, and it's not worth sailing north beyond Waterdeep, which can remind one of Tarmalune but with more folk and with sneering, strutting lords. Overcrowded, decadent, and full of guilds and nobles and rabble all hungry to be at one another's throats. Ripe for the plucking!

Then, sailing south, there's Baldur's Gate and Athkatla, very much the same. Big ports and getting bigger, with coins beyond counting and complacent highnoses sitting atop the heaps not knowing how weak they're becoming and how soon they'll fall. Like granaries with the doors left wide open, just waiting to be plundered!

Rich lands lie south along the coast from them, too, but pass Calimshan by; it's hot desert ruled by genasi slavers who'll happily enslave just about anyone. Why pay or trade when one can take?

Yet that still leaves Tethyr, then a great bay they call the Shining Sea, with independent ports all around it called the Tashalar, and a trading isle, Tharsult, right in the middle. Shrewd traders there, mind. A good place to shun until more is learned, or one could find one's purses empty.

Oh, and there's Chult, this great wild jungle no one rules, endless plants and monsters and timber just sitting there for the taking!

Plots and Adventure Sites

Black Silk Traders: The last of these infamous smugglers died fighting the Vigilant years ago, but their largest cache of coins, gold bars, and silks was never found. Constant rumors abound about just where in (or under) the city it might be, and rival treasure-seeking gangs have fought at least two deadly battles in the storage cellars under Haven Towers. Recent tales by servants of dead old-money recluses locate the cache in the walls of a grand Arendermore mansion—and gangs have begun invading mansions to seek it.

Skelmur the Stalker: One of the most fearsome ghost stories of Tarmalune is the tale of the murdered pirate Skelmur, said to still roam the city as a pair of floating eyes. This murderous spirit does nothing but spy on clear nights, selecting victims—but in fog he materializes, and his victims are found drowned, often times far from any water. Witnesses claim to have seen only the old pirates gnarled hands clutching the victim for a moment, then the victim continues to choke and sputter on water. He has slain dozens recently, and whispers are rising that it's because his treasure has been found and taken. If his bones and treasure are brought together and reburied, the rumors run, he will rest and the slayings end. Or is this all a cover for a gang out to murder everyone who crosses it? Then again, it could be both. Perhaps someone is controlling the old ghost.

Narla's Vengeful Ladies: For years wealthy and haughty Tarralune females have had their nastiest secrets told all over the city by this mysterious group (thought to be disgusted servants working with a wizard calling herself Narla, who uses spells to whisper messages into the back corners of many taverns). Now it seems someone is hunting Narla, because amid the gossip have been coded messages for members of a criminal gang, the Harbordark, who now

Skelmur the Stalker	**Level 8 Elite Lurker**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	XP 700
Initiative +12	**Senses** Perception +8; darkvision
HP 99; **Bloodied** 49	
AC 22; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 21	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** insubstantial	
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing	
⊕ **Spirit Touch** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**	
+12 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 3 necrotic damage.	
⊗ **Skelmur's Eyes** (minor 1/round; at-will) ✦ **Fear, Gaze, Psychic**	
Ranged 5; +12 vs. Will; 1d6 + 3 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of Skelmur's next turn. This attack doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.	
M **Drowning Hands** (standard; requires combat advantage against the target; recharges after Skelmur uses dematerialize; sustain minor) ✦ **Necrotic**	
+12 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 5 damage, ongoing 5 damage (save ends), and the target is dazed until the end of Skelmur's next turn. *Sustain Minor:* Skelmur can only sustain the effect on a target he hit with the above attack or following attack during his last turn. When he sustains the power, he repeats the attack on the target, dealing 5 damage (10 to an immobilized target).	
Dematerialize (standard; at-will)	
Skelmur reduces himself to a set of floating eyes, and he shifts 2 squares. He can make a Stealth check to hide if he has any sort of cover or concealment.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common
Skills History +9, Stealth +13	
Str 14 (+6)	**Dex** 18 (+8)	**Wis** 8 (+3)
Con 17 (+7)	**Int** 10 (+4)	**Cha** 20 (+9)

believe she has betrayed them to a rival group, the Drowned Ones, who are in turn hunting members of the Harbordark. Both gangs meet masked, since their membership is secret—but the murders are climbing higher and higher among the wealthy and prominent of Arendermore and Dawnside.

The Harbor Curse: A "taint" passes from person to person in Tarralune by direct touch, and it causes a bone to grow out of the forearm of an afflicted person in the shape of a fishhook. This "marks" them as one who will lead "true Tarralune" to "cast out the coin-grasping outlander scum," and they begin to hear voices of the dead whispering commands to them. Which is when the Vigilant start hunting them, to imprison them before certain Tarralune old-family "believers" start to gather to the Afflicted, obey them, and urge them to lead an uprising. The curse seldom affects more than one person at a time, but an Afflicted arises every two or three years.

The Sunsails Pact: For years Copperstreets shopkeepers imported wares at low prices, adorned them, then resold them in the city for higher amounts, doing well on the spread, because they belonged to the Sunsails Pact. This buying collective of ship captains and investors used their collective clout (promises of large orders) to obtain pots, mongery, and cloth in outland ports for low prices. Even Tarralune outside the Pact benefited from Sunsails deals that dragged down prices. Now the Pact has been shattered in a bitter power struggle, with the butcher Morlund Kalguth leading members into a new group who will vote on all decisions, renouncing the authoritarian longtime Pact leaders, the traveling traders Berrek Wyvernmere and Josztar Gallowstern. Accusations of treaty and contract thefts, funds seized at swordpoint, and double-dealing are flying back and forth, with many in the Fair New Pact accusing Wyvernmere and Gallowstern of secretly raking off "coins beyond counting" over the years. Knifings and at least one tavern brawl have come out of the split, and a Kalguth-owned rental house burned recently under mysterious circumstances that have the kin of those killed in the fire seeking vengeance and demanding a "full Vigilant hue and cry" after Wyvernmere and Gallowstern. The first of those men had disappeared, and Gallowstern has accused the Fair New Pact of murdering him, but Tarralune traders doing deals in other Windrise Ports claim to have met him there, trying to hire "adventurers formidable in a fray." Talk across Tarmalune is starting to take sides, fear and anger is rising, and there are rumors of various councilors secretly being members of both Pacts.

Belsturk's Hope: A Tarralune-built, nearly new ship has apparently sunk in the harbor, silently at its moorings without anyone seeing it go down and without any of its crew escaping. It was fully loaded with a rich new cargo, and the owner, wealthy trader Glustan Belsturk, is enraged and trying to hire divers and wizards to help him search the harbor muck for his ship—even as suspicious city investors accuse him of scuttling the ship or concocting this tale "out of whole lying tongue." *Someone* has been diving in the harbor, but only when fog is thick, and ferry folk even report hearing the clash of swords and cries of battle out on the waters!

Mhorauk's Mask: For months Councilor Tarlask Mhorauk has been acting strangely, murmuring nonsense and behaving as if he was elsewhere and seeing things not present. Now two councilors claim to have seen tentacles emerge from his mouth to strangle a would-be thief who accosted Mhorauk in a Dawnside alley late at night. Mhorauk has fiercely denied their tale—but has done so by a letter delivered to the Lord Speaker by a hired street youth, and he appears to have disappeared. His mansion is shuttered, but the Vigilant forced entry and discovered only terrified servants who claim not to have seen their master in recent days. Rumors are spreading about what sort of monster Mhorauk has become . . . or is he the victim of a hostile short-lived spell? Worse, has the councilor been this unknown creature all along?

Gasker Haerocloak: For some time rumors have stated that Gasker Haerocloak is a wizard to be avoided; those who cross him sicken and die. Now a servant who fled his employ (and then the city) has spread a tale that Haerocloak can by touch and spell cause the life-force of persons to be slowly drained away by magic he works later, if he desires it. It is true that rivals who feuded with Haerocloak have wasted away to their deaths. When the Vigilant sought to question him about this story, his landlady said he

had departed his lodgings to join the Firequench Order—but the Order has denied he is a member, despite witnesses claiming to have seen him entering and departing their citadel. Now three of the four Vigilants who are seeking him have fallen ill, two of them too weak to rise from their beds, and the fourth has gone to the Lord Speaker, who is said to be trying to hire those not of the Order to protect the Vigilant officer and to "get to the bottom of this."

The Seasewers: "Everyone knows" that sea water regularly rushes up the sewers of Tarmalune when storms drive ashore or tides rise, then flows back out again, somewhat cleansing them and make it impossible to have deep cellars—or any sort of underground passages at all—in most of the city that will stay dry; such spaces are flooded daily. Yet now tales are rounding the taverns of "a thing of magic, a rod or scepter" that hurls back water and keeps it away. It sickens and repels humans who tarry near it for too long, since it works on the water within them, but wherever it is placed, that chamber or tunnel is kept dry. It's said that smugglers are using this magic to store contraband where no one will think to seek it, and to tunnel to the walls of the mansions of the rich so as to breach those walls and steal.

Dragon Cults: Despite the grand words of Rathgar Malynd (that the ideal city is one where "no one person seeks to be as grand as a dragon"), there is strong evidence that Tarralune desire just that: to achieve the grandeur of dragons.

The city has dragon cults, and even an open "dragon trade." Some dragonborn crave the ready food and abundant magic of their old slave existences, and they seek to get it, "by raid or by trade," from the halflings and humans who are now the dragons' slaves. Other humans also seek the magic (and sophisticated tools) of the dragons' slaves in Skelkor, and they trade energetically with traders who have covert contact with the slave-towns of that empire.

Dragon Worship

A few Abeiran humans and dragonborn form secretive (and frowned-upon by most humans and dragonborn) cults that worship dragons. Tarmalune is home to one of the oldest, largest, and wealthiest of these cults, the Seekers of Scales.

Members include the human herbalist and alchemist **Mokaer Morntarn**, the raven-haired, strikingly handsome proprietor of Morntarn's Miracles on Duth Street, and the tiefling **Anratha Harrowstorm**, the softly smiling, sinister owner and keeper of Harrowstorm Fine Gowns on Winterwood Way.

These cults seek to uncover the secrets of how to become dragons, and so ascend to power and eventually, following the Dreaming belief of dragons (which the cultists know about), achieve "oneness with" (a place among) the gods.

They seek to learn how to do this by using herbs (drugs) widely sold for other purposes. Cultists believe these substances temporarily allow a chewer or imbiber to "tune in" to the thoughts of a nearby dragon (a random wyrm, unless proximity selects only one) to learn secrets and therefore achieve power or at least learn where dragon hoards are located.

Other Tarralune dragon worship cults include the Followers of Wyrm Wisdom and the Doomhoods.

The Followers are a fledgling, blundering society of ambitious shopkeepers, who hope to work magic with dragon blood they've acquired, but who have nothing to proceed with but a few fragments of long-ago wizards' work notes; they're seeking a living wizard willing to work with them. Word can be left for them in Copperstreets taverns.

The Doomhoods are rich, aging merchants who believe dragon's blood can give them youth and vigor. They pay well, and are hiring adventuring bands to hunt and fight dragons and bring them back wyrm blood and the hearts and brains of dragons. They work entirely through layers of go-betweens, protecting their identities carefully, but appear to be based in Arendermore.

Elsewhere in Abeir, other dragon worship cults have recently sprung up, such as the Hoods of Flame, in Sambral, and the Dreamers of Mreyelundur.

The Future

The balance of power in Tarmalune rests on the life of one man; when the Lord Speaker dies, the manner of his passing and the nature of any power struggle that ensues will do much to shape the future of this rich, fast-growing city.

Tarralune are ambitious and energetic, living for the dream of achieving great wealth. They "live hard," delighting in revelry and daring, and the shops of Tarmalune sell all manner of wares.

Tarmalune Great Port is growing more crowded and wealthy by the day, despite steadily increasing prices. "One can buy anything in Tarmalune," and folk do, daily. This makes it attractive to dragons and other wealth-seeking creatures of all sorts, including the merchants of not-so-distant Faerûn. They are converging, and the battle to possess that wealth and wield that power is just beginning.

About the Author

Ed Greenwood is the man who unleashed the Forgotten Realms® setting on an unsuspecting world. He works in libraries, writes fantasy, science fiction, horror, mystery, and even romance stories (sometimes all in the same novel), but he is still happiest churning out Realmslore, Realmslore, and more Realmslore. There are still a few rooms in his house with space left to pile up papers in . . .

Delving into Dungeon Delve

by Matthew Sernett
Illustrations by Jason A. Engle

In case you missed it, Dungeon Delve™ *hits the store shelves very soon. This new kind of product for the* Dungeons & Dragons® *Roleplaying Game offers a wealth of mini-adventures that you can use in different ways.*

What's Inside

Dungeon Delve offers thirty delves, one for each level of play. "Delve" is the book's shorthand for three linked encounters that create a sort of mini-adventure. In addition to advice for how to customize or extend each delve, the book also provides over forty new monsters and new traps interspersed throughout it. Other monsters might be new to you as well if you haven't purchased a copy of *Manual of the Planes*™, *Draconomicon*™*: Chromatic Dragons,* and *Open Grave: Secrets of the Undead*™. The tables below outline the book's contents so that you have an idea of the variety the book presents.

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Level	Delve	Encounter Levels	Some Monsters the PCs Face
1	Coppernight Hold	1, 2, 3	Kobolds, white dragon wyrmling
2	The Broken Tower	2, 3, 5	Goblins, skeletons, wolves
3	Orc Stronghold	2, 4, 6	Fire beetles, orcs, dire wolf
4	The Raiders' Hideout	4, 5, 7	Gnolls, hyenas, grell
5	Tomb of the Tiefling Empress	5, 6, 7	Skeletons, wights, zombies
6	Temple of the Forgotten Zealots	6, 7, 9	Snaketongue cultists, snakes, feymire crocodile
7	The Catacombs of Koptila	7, 8, 9	Orcs, ogres, zombies
8	Poisoned Shadows	8, 8, 11	Shadar-kai, gelatinous cube, oni, black dragon
9	Deceitful Descent	9, 10, 12	Cambions, humans, devils
10	Fear the Night	10, 11, 13	Zombies, vampires, wights
11	Last Will and Testament	11, 12, 14	Demons
12	Emerald Dawn	12, 13, 15	Yuan-ti, dragonborn, adult green dragon
13	Planar Bandits	13, 14, 16	Githyanki, roper, redspawn firebelchers
14	Hall of Echoing Screams	14, 15, 17	Umber hulks, mind flayers, drow, drider, grimlocks
15	Caves of Menace	15, 17, 18	Cyclopses, night hags, fomorians, ghouls, gargoyles
16	Eye of Flame	15, 17, 19	Helmed horror, bone naga, fire archons, fire giants, salamanders, air archon
17	Caverns of Demise	17, 18, 21	Blackroot treant, quicklings, salamanders, beholder eye tyrant, rakshasa assassin
18	Summer's End	18, 18, 21	Treants, harpies, cyclopses, death hags, wild hunt hounds
19	Temple of the Four Winds	19, 20, 22	Battle guardian, dragonborn, death knight, wights, wraiths, elder blue dragon
20	Cold Hands of Chaos	20, 21, 23	Humans, rot harbingers, demons, ice archons, blood fiend
21	Bahamut's Shame	21, 22, 24	Minotaurs, cambions, astral stalker, rakshasas, marut
22	Smoldering Flames of War	21, 23, 25	Devils, cambions, dragonborn
23	Lich's Last Stand	23, 24, 26	Dragonspawn godslayers, dragonborn, liches, larva mage, elder red dragon
24	Ghoulish Designs	24, 25, 26	Demons, abyssal ghouls, rot harbingers, humans
25	Temple of Primordial Fire	25, 25, 27	Flameskulls, fire archons, gorgons
26	Shadowfell Schism	26, 27, 29	Sorrowsworn, death titan, specters, abyssal ghouls, raksasha, ancient black dragon
27	Storming the Clouds	27, 28, 29	Dragonspawn, storm giants, fire titan, dragonborn, gorgons
28	The Hungering Temple	28, 29, 31	Sorrowsworn, balor, gibbering orb, abyssal ghouls, Doresain
29	The Silence of Evil	29, 30, 30	Angels, maruts, runescribed dracolich
30	Deific Heart of Magma	30, 31, 33	Primordial naga, colossi, efreets, balors, ancient red dragon

How to Use Dungeon Delve

Dungeon Delve offers a lot of great ideas for how to use its contents. The suggestions below elaborate on those ideas and provide new ones to give you a better sense of how *Dungeon Delve* can make being the DM easier and the game more fun.

Try Being a DM: If you haven't sat behind the DM screen for the 4th Edition of D&D before, *Dungeon Delve* is a great way to start.

Invite a Guest DM: *Dungeon Delve* provides an easy means for another player to take the DM reins for a session without too many entanglements.

Customize a Delve: Delves easily change to suit whatever need you might have.

Place a Delve in an Adventure: Delves come with their own plots, but you can synch them up easily with your current adventure to create a grander experience.

When the PCs Go Off the Beaten Path: Scrambling for ideas now that the players have thrown you for a loop? *Dungeon Delve* to the rescue!

Take a Smaller Group on a Side Trek: Did a couple players miss the session? Send the player characters that remain on a one-session side trek.

Play the Delve Competitively: Pit your wits against the players'.

Play a One-Shot Game: Kill a rainy afternoon with an impromptu session of D&D.

Combine Delves Into an Adventure: Create your own adventures the easy way.

Try Being a DM

If you're new to the DM's duties or to being a DM with the new rules, the prospects of creating a whole adventure can be daunting. Published adventures provide a great resource, but they're a lot to digest. If

New Monster	Level	Role
Kobold Cleaver	2	Minion
Big Gribad (NPC)	3	Elite Soldier (Leader)
Decaying Skeleton	5	Minion
Tal Lorvas (NPC)	6	Elite Controller
Frost Hound	7	Soldier
Tiefling Deceiver	8	Artillery
Cambion Stalwart	8	Elite Brute (Leader)
Koptila (NPC)	8	Solo Controller (Leader)
Massive Gelatinous Cube	8	Elite Brute
Human Blood Cultist	10	Minion
Cobalt Serpent	10	Skirmisher
Flameborn Zombie	10	Soldier
Borrit Crowfinger (NPC)	11	Solo Controller
Githyanki Corsair	12	Skirmisher
Abyssal Spitter	14	Solo Brute
Windrage Harpy	15	Artillery
Inferno Bat	15	Skirmisher
Dragonborn Hunter	17	Elite Skirmisher
Minotaur Mauler	18	Brute
Cyclops Reaver	18	Soldier
Cyclops Earthquake Shaman	19	Elite Artillery
Jelenra, Tulani of Summer (NPC)	20	Skirmisher
Wild Hunt Acolyte	21	Elite Skirmisher (Leader)
Rakshasa Destroyer	21	Soldier
Rot Hurler	22	Elite Artillery
Putrid Rot Harbinger	22	Soldier
Cambion Soul Conflagrant	23	Artillery
Hezrou Mangler	24	Brute
Bluespawn Defender	25	Elite Soldier
Fire Archon Blazesword	25	Elite Soldier
Great Conflagration	26	Elite Artillery
Molten Firestorm	26	Elite Brute
Flameskull Lord	26	Controller
Marut Champion	26	Elite Controller
Angel of Valor Warrior	26	Minion
Lava Gorgon	26	Skirmisher
Marut Battlemaster	26	Elite Soldier
Superior Fire Titan	26	Elite Soldier
Rot Spewer	27	Artillery
Demonfang Golem	27	Elite Brute
Stormforged Colossus	27	Elite Brute
Vecna's Silence	28	Solo Brute

you want to dip your toe in the water and not have to read too much to do it, a delve gives you everything you need.

In just six pages, a delve gives you a session's worth of play and a full plot from beginning to glorious end. You don't have to digest much, and the players get a full experience whether you ultimately decide to continue as DM or not.

If the other players are new to D&D, you can save time by providing them with characters for the delve. This gets them into the game fast and lets them see the various roles and mechanics in action before committing the time to creating characters. You can even use the delve as a prologue to the careers of the characters your players later create. Perhaps the delve PCs are relatives, friends, or ancestors of the PCs, and elements from the delve are incorporated into the backgrounds of their characters.

Example: You start out with "Coppernight Hold," a delve about reclaiming a mine from a young dragon and its kobold worshipers. The PCs you make up are a dwarf fighter, tiefling warlock, human cleric of Erathis, halfling rogue, and eladrin wizard.

The dwarf is related to the mine's missing owner. One of the militia members that went missing investigating the problem owes the tiefling a lot of money. The cleric believes it her duty to protect this symbol of local civilization and industry. The halfling is the tiefling's friend and hopes to pocket loot from the mine. The eladrin knows more about the situation than she cares to admit: She knows about the dragon and seeks a book of rituals and lore it took from an eladrin dignitary who was slain shortly after arriving in the world.

After the adventure concludes, the PCs discover the treasure described in the adventure, including a *+1 thunderburst longbow* (the level 4 magic item noted in the adventure). The ritual book the eladrin was looking for isn't there, but a crumpled scrap of paper records the sale of a book to someone in a town called Winterhaven.

New Traps and Hazards	Level	Role
Sand Cascade Trap	4	Obstacle
Ice Trap	5	Obstacle
Ice Cell Trap	5	Obstacle
Exploding Braziers	6	Blaster
Crushing Manacles Trap	15	Obstacle
Far Realm Insanity Portal Trap	16	Blaster
Primordial Flame Jets	23	Blaster
Necrotic Tiles	23	Elite Warder
Four Winds Trap	24	Blaster
Eye of Eradication	24	Elite Lurker
Elemental Conduit	25	Blaster

When the players make their own characters, they make a dragonborn warlord, a half-elf ranger, a human fighter, an eladrin wizard, and a human paladin. The eladrin wizard might be the same one that went on the delve, still seeking the book of lore, or it could be a relative. Either way, you have a ready hook with the scrap of paper pointing to Winterhaven, the city the PCs are traveling to at the start of *Keep on the Shadowfell*, the first adventure you plan to run. Perhaps the next adventure takes place years later, and the half-elf ranger is the son of the cleric that claimed the *+1 thunderburst longbow*. The character now wields this gift from his father. Maybe it takes place just a few months later and the dragonborn warlord is a bounty hunter looking for the tiefling and halfling partners in crime. He met up with the eladrin while investigating leads. Whatever way you handle it, you can use the material from the first session in later adventures to make it all feel like one campaign.

Invite a Guest DM

Maybe you need a day off. Perhaps your friend wants to give DMing a try. Maybe your old DM is in town for the weekend, and you want to play D&D with your regular game group—but on the other side of the screen. Whatever the reason, having a delve handy makes it easy to slip a game session or two into your regular campaign without interrupting the plans and stories you already have in place. With a delve, you can pass the reins over with a good idea of what to expect, and your guest doesn't have to do a lot of work to prepare. You and the guest DM could go over the various options for customizing the delve to fit into what's going on, or you can let the DM surprise you and enjoy the player's role. As an added bonus, you can use the PC you create as an ally, enemy, or friend in need of rescue later in the campaign. Alternatively, you can play a nonplayer character the players already know to give that character more depth and meaning.

Customize a Delve

D&D makes it easy to customize the delves to suit whatever need you might have. Think of a delve like a car. You can drive one off the lot as is, choose the features first and spend a little time customizing it, or use it for parts. The key is that you don't have to change a lot to make things work for your players. Sometimes all you need to do is change an NPC's name.

Here's a list of some of the things you might do to customize the delve you choose:

- ✦ Change or extend the map.
- ✦ Alter the monster mix by picking other monsters of the same level.
- ✦ Change an NPC's name and background.
- ✦ Give a monster a name, background, and personality.
- ✦ Break up the encounter order.
- ✦ Add or subtract monsters or traps to increase or decrease difficulty.
- ✦ Insert a skill challenge between or within an encounter.
- ✦ Change the adventure hook.
- ✦ Add treasure or mysterious objects that point to a new adventure.
- ✦ Introduce the lackeys of a villain who will appear in later adventures.
- ✦ Describe the locations differently (maybe the castle rooms are caverns).
- ✦ Have the monsters hold allegiance to an organization or deity the PCs already oppose.
- ✦ Change the setting for the adventure (instead of a distant tower in the forest, maybe it takes place in an abandoned building in a city).

Place a Delve in an Adventure

You can add a delve to an adventure you're going to run, but you can also add it at a moment's notice. You can do this to personalize a published adventure or just to spice things up when things get slow.

Example: To show how this can be done, I'm going to select a *Dungeon* adventure at random and synch things up as I write this section of the article.

My scroll-and-click random selection ended on "Dark Heart of Mithrendain" by Greg Marks (http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/duad/20080829). I don't know anything about this adventure since I haven't read it before, but it looks pretty neat. It's an adventure that appears to take place in the Feywild in an eladrin city. It's for 12th-level PCs. I'll skim the contents and jump to page . . . 20, I guess. That way it will be like I'm in the middle of the adventure. Then I'll see what delve fits best and alter it if I have need.

I see a lot of story and intrigue in this adventure—plenty of roleplaying. Whatever I do needs to fit into the complex web of character interactions and plot points. Page 20 happens to be an encounter in a cavern area. The caverns are the location of a banshrae breeding program by the main villain, a lamia disguising herself as an eladrin noble named Jelvistra. The encounter in the cave pits the PCs against a dryad briar witch and her pets. The dryad is the custodian of the breeding program. Let's see what delves could fit in here.

Looking at the delves available, five of the options in the book appear to be in the ballpark:

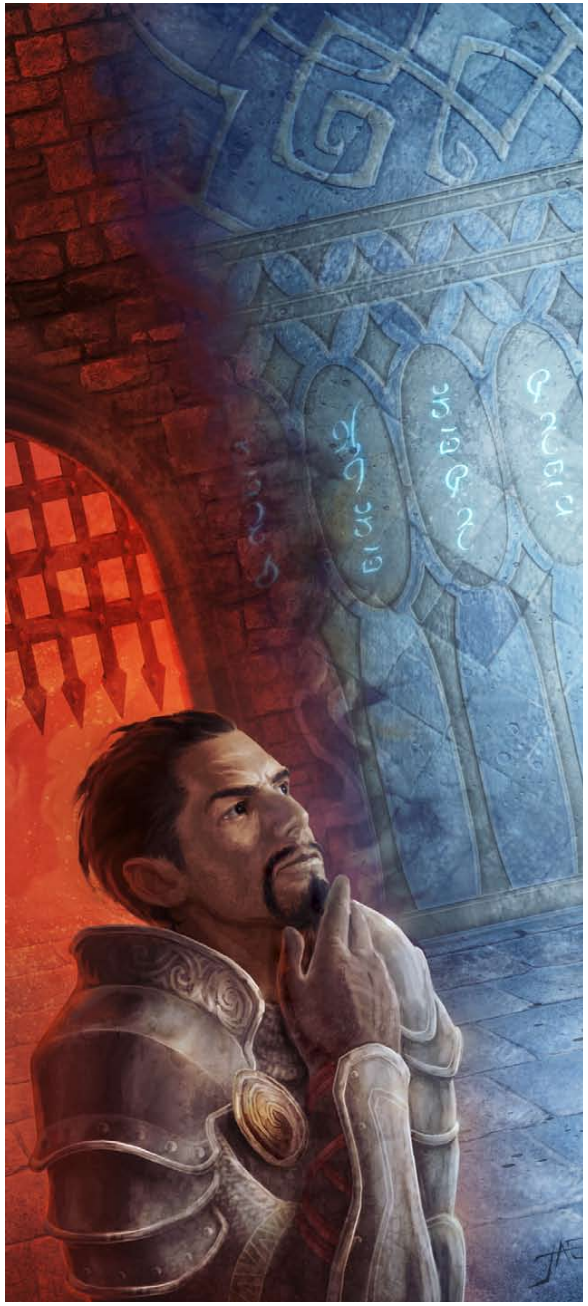
"Deceitful Descent" could work if I ditch the story elements, but the encounters' levels are a tad low, so I'd need to change those too. "Fear the Night" looks pretty good. I'll keep that in mind. "Last Will and Testament" would require a lot of change and improvisation. "Emerald Dawn" might work, but I'd need to put a dragon in the adventure, and I'm not sure I want to. "Planar Bandits" could work, but I'd need to add a significant subplot to explain what the githyanki are doing there.

"Fear the Night" looks best to me because it appears to require the least amount of work. I could tell at first glance that it would be good and that I could leave virtually everything intact. It has an adventure hook about villagers asking the PCs to help them with the vampires that have claimed a nearby forest, but I don't need any of that.

My concept is that the human necromancer at the end of the adventure is instead an eladrin noble who was exiled for his crimes against life. He's in cahoots with Jelvistra and helping her plans by experimenting with banshraes and giving her eladrin vampire warriors. I'll make a note to include vampire bloodhunters (level 10 minions) in a couple later encounters to firm up the connection. I'll even give them the eladrin *fey step* ability to make them feel more like eladrin. I envision them showing up from hiding by using *fey step* to suddenly surround a single PC.

As far as changes to the delves' encounters, I'll add a door to them that is hidden by an illusion in the dryad's cave. The PCs might find it on their own, or

Level	Delve	Encounter Levels	Some Monsters the PCs Face
9	Deceitful Descent	9, 10, 12	Cambions, humans, devils
10	Fear the Night	10, 11, 13	Zombies, vampires, wights
11	Last Will and Testament	11, 12, 14	Demons
12	Emerald Dawn	12, 13, 15	Yuan-ti, dragonborn, adult green dragon
13	Planar Bandits	13, 14, 16	Githyanki, roper, redspawn firebelchers



a vampire bloodhunter might come out to investigate the noise of the fight. I'll ignore the text in "Fear the Night" about villagers. Maybe I'll talk about dissected bodies of banshraes.

The first encounter has human blood cultists. They can be eladrin or banshrae blood cultists without me changing a thing. The next encounter pits the PCs against a vampire lord. He's second in command to the eladrin necromancer. The original text shows him chafing under the necromancer's control, but I think I'll make him into a her—the immortal vampire lover of the long-lived eladrin. She probably introduced the eladrin to the dark powers. I imagine her attempting to seduce him for a snack but being seduced by him instead. Again, adding *fey step* makes this monster feel more like an eladrin and doesn't change the threat much.

The final encounter pits the PCs against my now-eladrin necromancer and wights. The necromancer uses a vampire minion as a puppet while hiding. It's a good trick. I also see a mention of this being the vampire lord's tomb. I like that idea. It's neat to think of the lady vampire preying upon the citizens of the glittering eladrin city and returning to her secret and long-forgotten tomb. The end encounter doesn't require any change beyond what I've described, but to hammer the connection home, I'll have the vampire be keeping a family tree of sorts in her sarcophagus. It records those she has sired for Jelvistra on behalf of her lover (perhaps even people in the eladrin court the PCs have talked to!). Jealous of the interactions between Jelvistra and her eladrin beau, she refers to the lamia only as "she" or "that despicable insect."

Done. Having done this thinking, I find I really like these two characters. If the PCs are sloppy, I happily can try to get either or both to escape after meeting the heroes. A crevice in the floor of the final encounter room would work great for this purpose.

With just a little thought and time, I've added a lot of depth and personal detail to the adventure and set up cool future conflicts. When the initial thread of the adventure runs its course, the PCs might seek to ferret out the vampires in the eladrin court or hunt down the escaped lovers. If one died and another escaped, the PCs have earned the enmity of a patient and clever foe.

When the PCs Go Off the Beaten Path

Perhaps you're running a published adventure, and the players light out for unknown territory. Maybe they're following that red herring you put in the plot to the bottom of the sea. Whatever the reason, players sometimes go in an unexpected direction, leaving you to scramble to come up with something cool.

Resist the urge to railroad them back to the plot at hand. A lot of the fun of playing D&D is creating the story, and players rightfully want to be a big part of the story the game tells. Instead, pull out *Dungeon Delve*, and stall for time. If the PCs have wandered out of the adventure, it should be easy to throw another hook their way and set up a delve as written. Don't worry about how to fit it into the ongoing adventure immediately; just start running with it. As the session goes on, you can keep the main adventure plot in mind and find opportunities to tie the two together.

Here are a few suggestions for how the delve might help bring them back to where they need to be.

✦ Insert an NPC captive of the foes in the delve who knows something useful about the adventure the PCs left.

✦ Have the villains be allied with the villains from the main adventure. Maybe some of the adventure villains show up to cut a deal with the delve villains just as the PCs are leaving the delve.

✦ Have the delve's villains be rivals who are spying on the villains of the main adventure, and defeating them gives the PCs the means of doing some of their own espionage.

✦ Treasure offers another good place to provide hints and tie-ins. Maybe investigating the properties of a strange magic key puts them back on the right path.

Take a Smaller Group on a Side Trek

So you normally play with six players, but this week only three showed. You could work to change the adventure and then try to figure out an explanation for where the other PCs went. You could run things as they are and not worry about explaining things.

Or, you can insert a delve into the action. Take the players that showed up on their own little adventure before getting back to the main plot with the whole group.

To do this you can use the advice and examples provided above for Place a Delve in an Adventure and When the PCs Go Off the Beaten Path. Just add the step of reducing encounter difficulty, or choose a lower level delve.

To reduce encounter difficulty, you should look at the XP granted for a monster of the PCs' level. Multiply that number by the number of players missing. Now you just take monsters out of the encounter until the subtraction of XP goes down by that amount.

That might make encounters less interesting or you might not be able to do that, so the next best thing is switching out monsters. Subtract the XP for the missing PCs from the encounter total and reconstruct the encounter with lower-level foes.

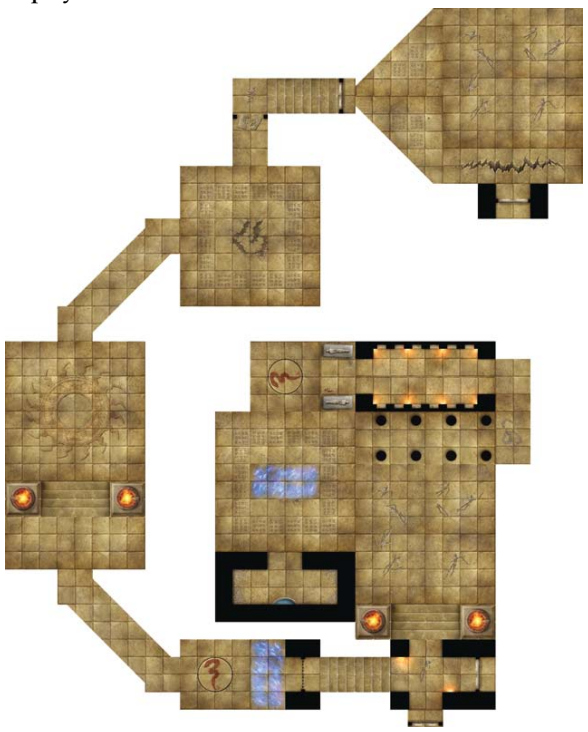
The simplest thing by far is to use a lower-level delve. Missing one or two players? Pick a delve that's a level lower than the PCs' level. If you're missing three or more, aim for a delve two levels lower than the PCs' level.

Play the Delve Competitively

You can play a delve like a contest between players and DM. In this case the players and DM pit wits against one another using the encounter locations as the arena and the monsters and PCs as playing pieces. *Dungeon Delve* talks about this idea in a lot more detail.

Play a One-Shot Game

Perhaps you're pressed for time, or maybe you just want to play a pick-up game. A delve offers a great way for players to get a full experience in a single session. To play a pick-up game on a moment's notice, you should have characters handy for the level you want to play.



One-shot games are a great place for players and DMs to experiment. Ever wondered just how tough a monster you can throw at the PCs? The delve is your chance. If you're building your own monsters and traps, you can try them out without risk of impact to an ongoing campaign. With premade characters they're not necessarily invested in, players can play out of their comfort zones and see what it's like to play classes or roles with which they're unfamiliar. If players make their own characters, they can experiment with different character builds or play higher-level versions of their current character to evaluate future choices.

Combine Delves Into an Adventure

Dungeon Delve provides thirty delves and ninety-nine encounters, so you have plenty of ingredients for building a longer adventure of your own devising. It's easy to grab a few delves of about the right level and string them together with a common plot.

Example: To show how this can be done, I'm going to roll a d30. (If you're new to roleplaying, the thirty-sided die is an unusual die not used in D&D and used rarely by other games.)

I got a 7. So, imagining that the PCs are 7th level, I'm going to string together delves to make a larger adventure. Here are delves that look like they will be easiest to work with because of the number of 7th-level encounters:

Revising the Map

In splicing the encounters together, I had to move elements of the maps around a little, but it did a couple of neat things. I've curled the rooms into a spiral to avoid having long string lengthwise, and now the structure of the complex reminds me a little of a coiled snake. I also found a neat dungeon tile with the bones of a snake on it. That fits right in with the theme of Zehir-cult connection to the orcs' activities.

The map contains a couple of doors to who knows where in the penultimate encounter area. I decided to leave these in. I'm not certain what I'll do with them yet. Maybe one is a trap and the other blocks entrance to a spiral stair that snakes down into the earth. Then again, it could hide a magic portal that leads to the appropriately leveled and themed delve, Temple of the Forgotten Zealots.

I'm detecting two basic themes: orcs and undead (the delves for levels 3, 5, and 7), or swamp dwellers such as black dragons and yuan-ti (the delves for 6 and 8). I'd like to have an adventure with around ten encounters, so the orcs and undead theme feels like the way to go.

"Orc Stronghold" pits the PCs against orcs that have invaded a manor. "Tomb of the Tiefling Empress" has the PCs opposing a necromancer who seeks to find a lost ring of fiendish power in a tomb.

Level	Delve	Encounter Levels	Some Monsters the PCs Face
3	Orc Stronghold	2, 4, 6	Fire beetles, orcs, dire wolf
4	The Raiders' Hideout	4, 5, 7	Gnolls, hyenas, grell
5	Tomb of the Tiefling Empress	5, 6, 7	Skeletons, wights, zombies
6	Temple of the Forgotten Zealots	6, 7, 9	Snaketongue cultists, snakes, feymire crocodile
7	The Catacombs of Koptila	7, 8, 9	Orcs, ogres, zombies
8	Poisoned Shadows	8, 8, 11	Shadar-kai, gelatinous cube, oni, black dragon

"The Catacombs of Koptila" is about the threat posed by a forgotten clan of ogres and the tomb of their king.

I need a good story to string these together but the three in the delves aren't quite right. I want an explanation for why the orcs, ogres, and a human necromancer are working together. Yet thinking about it, the best thing might be to turn the human necromancer into an orc necromancer. That cuts one element out of the equation. Ogres work with orcs often enough that now all I need is a nefarious plot for my orc necromancer that the players want to foil.

Looking at the necromancer, I see no reason he couldn't be an orc. The players won't be able to tell the difference. Just to be sure, I'll note that he should have low-light vision and *warrior's surge,* a common orc encounter power that allows a bloodied orc to regain a quarter of its hit points after making a basic attack.

In thinking about the stories of the delves, I hit upon the idea of combining them. My idea is that orcs invaded a manor to get a ring of necromantic power. The ring is the key needed to awaken the undead corpse of a legendary ogre warlord. As I envision the adventure, the PCs hear about an orc invasion of a town from refugees. When they go to investigate, orcs have left, but some are still celebrating in the manor of the village mayor. The PCs clean the manor of orcs and discover that the ring is the key to awakening an ogre warlord. The orcs who have it have already left, departing a different way than the rest of the raiding party. Following the smaller group of orcs brings the PCs to catacombs that combine the contents of "Tomb of the Tiefling Empress" and the "Catacombs of Koptila."

I need details to make this plot sketch hang together. How do the PCs learn about the ring? How do they know to follow the smaller group of orcs?

Inspiration strikes! One refugee is the mayor of the village, a shifty tiefling gentleman who begs the PCs to retrieve a ring that is a treasured heirloom. He offers the PCs whatever wealth they find in his manor in exchange for the ring if his sob story doesn't work. He's desperate to get the ring back but reluctant to tell the PCs why. Players can use the Insight skill to learn his desperation about the ring, but they can't get the true story out of him without a difficult social skill challenge.

The story isn't integral to the plot, so it's okay if the PCs don't get it when they meet the mayor. My idea is that the mayor had his own dreams of conquest and glory. He bargained for the ring with cultists of Zehir who were bargaining secretly with the orc necromancer also. The mayor is worried that the orcs will get the ring, and he'll lose his dreams of conquest along with everything else. He's forgetting that evidence of his culpability lies with the ring: letters written between himself and the cultists. Once he remembers, he hires thugs to ambush the PCs so that they can't spread the story of his wrongdoing.

That will be my tenth encounter: an ambush outside the manor before the PCs follow the smaller group of orcs. I'll add the mayor to that encounter. If they talk to him, it leads the players after the smaller group of orcs. Alternatively, I'll allow the PCs to run down the larger group of orcs as an extra encounter, and hopefully the natural desire to get all the orcs will drive the PCs to return to the manor and follow the smaller group.

The orc necromancer wants the ring to claim leadership of the tribe, but he didn't bargain well enough with the cultists of Zehir. Instead he decided to steal it by encouraging a faction of orcs to go on an unauthorized raid. If the PCs start talking to orcs, the ones in the larger group clearly don't know anything about the ring. They went along with the raid against their chieftain's wishes (for the plunder, they say), but once the necromancer started talking about going to a tomb, they bailed and decided to return to the chieftain.

That appears like a great basic plot, and there's depth there for when the players decide to investigate and roleplay. I've also got the cultists of Zehir as a plot hook for a future adventure. Why did they sell the ring? What are their larger plans? I don't know, but once the characters have the letters, they'll certainly start asking themselves those questions. All I have to do is insert Zehir cultist involvement in a future adventure, and curiosity should drive the players to get their characters involved.

Let's look at the encounters to see what needs to be done with them.

Encounter	Encounter Level	Monsters
Orc Stronghold 1	2	2 fire beetles, 3 orc raiders
Orc Stronghold 2	4	Orc berserker, 10 orc drudges, eye of Gruumsh, false-floor pit
Orc Stronghold 3	6	Orc chieftain, 2 orc berserkers, dire wolf
Tomb of the Tiefling Empress 1	5	3 boneshard skeletons, 2 wights
Tomb of the Tiefling Empress 2	6	3 blazing skeletons, 2 chillborn zombies, ice trap
Tomb of the Tiefling Empress 3	7	Zombie hulk, Tal Lorvas (necromancer), 4 decaying skeletons, 2 exploding braziers
The Catacombs of Koptila 1	7	3 ogre savages, 3 orc raiders
The Catacombs of Koptila 2	8	Ogre warhulk, 2 ogre skirmishers
The Catacombs of Koptila 3	9	Koptila (undead ogre warlord), 2 zombie hulks

I don't mind some easy encounters, but the first two encounters are too low. I'd also like to have a little spike in difficulty early on. I'll change the monsters around in them to bring things up, and I'll add that outdoor encounter with the tiefling mayor and his thugs to put the spike in place. Occurring as it does on the heels of the other three encounters, it should be tough for the PCs already, so I won't make it too hard. I can use dungeon tiles from *DU2 Streets of Shadow* to create the map.

I'd like my necromancer and Koptila to be in the same final encounter (the big reveal of Koptila being raised from his tomb!). That means I'll need to switch things around in those encounters. Tal Lorvas has the power to raise decaying skeletons, so that will add to the difficulty and make for a cinematic end. Plus, I want the last six encounters to be in one large dungeon crawl. I'll combine the two maps from the delves, and maybe even move rooms around a bit to suit my needs.

A symbol of Zehir already appears in the second encounter of the "Tomb of the Tiefling Empress." That's a perfect tie-in to my cultist subplot! There's also sun iconography and a strange energy monolith in the last Koptila encounter. I'll theme that with Zehir by making the symbol one of Zehir and having the energy monolith take the form of writhing snakes made of shadow.

Here's a run-down of the encounters with my changes.

Encounter	Encounter Level	Monsters
Orc Stronghold 1	6	Ogre savage, 10 orc drudges, 3 orc berserkers
Orc Stronghold 2	7	3 orc bloodragers, eye of Gruumsh, false-floor pit
Orc Stronghold 3	6	Orc chieftain, 2 orc berserkers, dire wolf
My outdoor fight with the mayor	8	Tiefling darkblade (mayor), human mage, 3 human berserkers, 2 halfling prowlers
The Catacombs of Koptila 1	7	3 ogre savages, 3 orc raiders
Tomb of the Tiefling Empress 1	7	Zombie hulk, flame snake, 4 boneshard skeletons, 2 wights
The Catacombs of Koptila 2	8	Ogre warhulk, 2 ogre skirmishers
Tomb of the Tiefling Empress 2	6	3 blazing skeletons, 2 chillborn zombies, ice trap
Tomb of the Tiefling Empress 3	7	Zombie hulk, 4 decaying skeletons, 2 exploding braziers
The Catacombs of Koptila 3	10	Koptila (undead ogre warlord), Tal Lorvas (necromancer), 3 orc warriors

Ultimately it makes sense to me to move around the encounters from the two delves. I put the flame snake in the first "Tomb of the Tiefling Empress" encounter to pound home the Zehir connection. I plan to have it crawl as a hissing voice whispers in the PCs' minds, "You're not welcome here." The other creatures in the encounter will act as though they can't see it, hinting at the idea that the snake is a message from Zehir just for the PCs. Then the Zehir symbol later and the snake stuff in the final encounter should really have the PCs wondering about the mysterious Zehir cult.

That's it. I've devised my own adventure with maps, encounters, NPCs, and everything I need, and it took just about an hour.

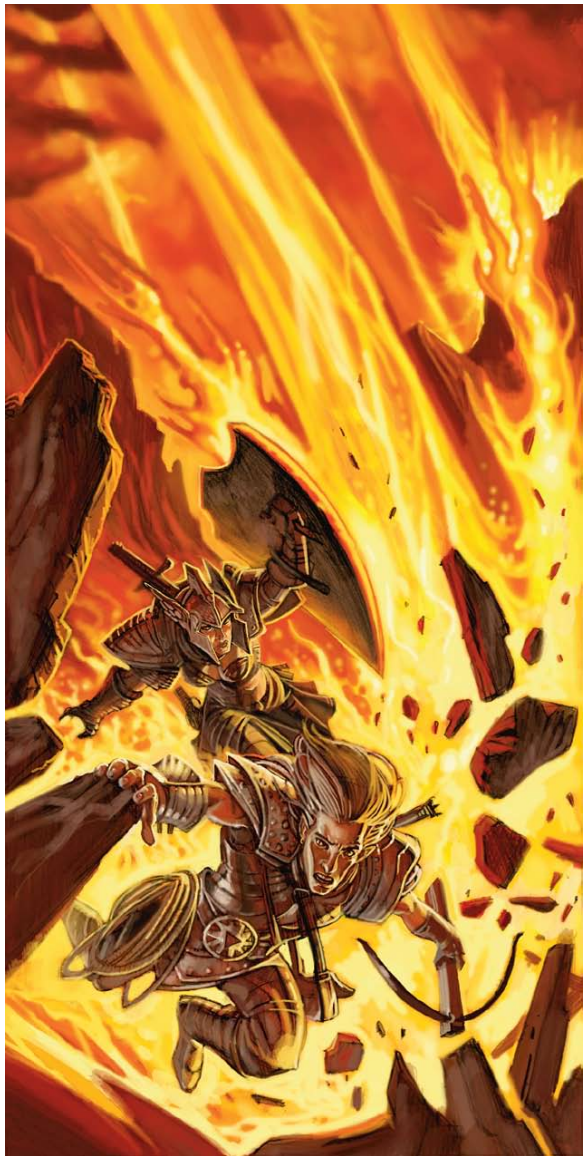
About the Author

Matthew Sernett has been a designer of 4th Edition, the editor-in-chief of Dragon® Magazine, a pizza cook, an onion packer, and an assembly line worker in a spring factory. In 1999, while working for *Men's Health Magazine*, he narrowly avoided being a wardrobe tracker in the male fashion industry.

The Gnome, the Bad, and the Ugly

BY JAMES WYATT

illustration by Steve Ellis



Since the launch of 4th Edition, we've taken some flak from fans who felt that the race selection in the first *Player's Handbook* wasn't ideal—that including the dragonborn, the eladrin, and the tiefling couldn't make up for the lack of two races whose place in the game goes almost all the way back to the beginning: the gnome and the half-orc.

With the release of *Player's Handbook 2* in March, that situation is finally remedied as the gnome and the half-orc return to the game (along with three other races!). What kept these classic races out of the first *Player's Handbook*? What made us ready to include them the second time around? Well, let me tell you some stories . . .

A Tale of Two Gnomes

I played a gnome once.

Well, that's not completely fair. There might have been a time, before I read the Dragonlance saga, when I found the gnome presented in the first AD&D *Player's Handbook* appealing and decided to play a diminutive, magic-resistant, kobold-hating miner who could speak with moles. I don't honestly remember. Once Dragonlance introduced the tinker gnomes of Mount Nevermind, I'm sorry to say that I pretty much lost interest in the race.

Until 1994, when I created Ku.

I wanted Ku to be an atypical gnome. I wanted him to reinvent the gnome race. He had been a slave in the kingdoms of the duergar, brutally treated and hardened to a bitterly sharp edge by the experience. He had earned his freedom and sworn to fight evil slavers wherever he found them. He was a ranger, and I imagined him lurking in dark tunnels, leaping down on his foes with both short swords flashing in the torchlight, the last thing his enemies saw.

It was a cool story. When I actually brought him to the table, though, I remembered an important thing about gnomes that I had completely forgotten:

Gnomes are cute.

Every player at the table and every NPC in the adventure treated Ku as an adorable child. It turned out to be pretty fun, but it was a big step away from how I originally envisioned the character.

I have yet to play another gnome in D&D, but there is another gnome in this story. A couple of years ago, I created a gnome mage in *World of Warcraft*, a little guy by the name of Dellemn. I made him to go along with a dwarf character my son had made, and I chose a gnome mage because I hadn't yet played either that race or that class. I invented the personality quirk for him that he thought he was a dwarf—I tried to make him look as much like a dwarf as possible, and in talking to my son, I roleplayed that delusion (to my son's constant irritation).

Pretty soon, my son wanted to make another new character, a night elf, and Dellemn traveled across the world to the night elf starting area so I didn't have to make up another new character myself. Once there, I found a new aspect of Dellemn's personality—he told jokes all the time, pointed at things, and laughed a lot, all using the emotes built into the game. Basically, I was having fun playing up the comical aspects of the gnome race in WoW, and I had a sudden insight into the lasting appeal of the gnome race that had escaped me for so long.

Gnomes are cute, and gnomes are funny, and sometimes that's okay.

Cooler Heads

Fortunately for the game of **Dungeons & Dragons**, Bill Slavicsek understood that before I did.

In late 2006, the world design team for 4th Edition discussed gnomes and came up with a story we were pretty enamored with. It gave them a dark past as ally-slaves to the fomorians, a new look that had more in common with the ugly but good-hearted fairy folk you see in folklore than with any past representation of gnomes in D&D, and a new social role as itinerant tinkers. In other words, it swam seriously upstream from the cute and funny gnomes of past editions of D&D and of *World of Warcraft*. When Bill received and reviewed that team's world guide, he had this to say about gnomes:

"Gnomes, while still in discussion, might just embrace the funny and cute and come up with something playable that allows people to imagine gnomes in ways they certainly seem to want to. We should stop trying to swim upstream to create a cool, dark, heroic gnome and instead turn our powers to making a cool, funny, heroic gnome."

That said, in putting together the first *Player's Handbook*, we wanted to assemble a collection of races that represented the diverse population of the D&D world and appealed to a broad cross-section of the D&D audience. We felt, and I still think rightly, that the gnome would have a better place in *Player's Handbook 2*, where it could expand the game rather than defining its initial parameters.

Still, by the time we were working on the first *Monster Manual*, we needed to have a better idea of what the D&D gnome would become. We had to move beyond Bill's "still in discussion" direction to a look and a story for the gnome that would provide the foundation to be built on in *PH2*.

Player's Handbook, First Among Equals

As I keep typing the words, "the first *Player's Handbook*, I keep being reminded of their importance. More than ever before, we have planned this edition of D&D to be a growing and expanding game. The first *Player's Handbook* defines the core experience, but each additional *PH* we do is going to expand that experience in fascinating new ways. The thing I'm only starting to realize as we make headway on *PH3* is how much these books can and will expand the story of the D&D universe. It's not like we're advancing a hidden timeline of the assumed D&D world, but each year's new releases have some story seeds contained in them that might help to shape the story you decide to tell in your campaign or with your character that year.

While I was working on the *Monster Manual*, I wrote up a gnome entry, drawing on the world team information, Bill's response to it, and a couple of gnome designs that folks like Chris Sims, Logan Bonner, and Mike Mearls had kicked around, and I sent it around for review. Boiled down to essentials, here's where that ended up:

- **Gnomes are Small fey.** To some extent, they occupy a space in the world that past editions have filled with brownies, leprechauns, and other little folk from fairy tales. They have a sense of humor and laugh a lot, and sometimes they even play elaborate pranks on people.
- **Gnomes do not create inventions that shatter the magical and medieval flavor of** D&D**.** They remain innately magical, emphasizing their fey ties.
- **Mechanically, gnomes are all about being small, beneath notice, and magically able to fade out of view.** They don't gravitate toward the defender role.
- **Gnomes are a race that covers the variety of gnomes we think people want to play.** Some gnomes wander the world with kender-like curiosity and wonder, some gnomes are full of humor and practical jokes, some gnomes traffic in secrets, and some gnomes have escaped the slavery of the fomorians but retain a strong sense of bitterness over the experience.

That's pretty much the gnome that appears in the *Monster Manual*, and the same gnome returns as a full-fledged player character race in *Player's Handbook 2*.

Half Orc, All Awesome

Bill was dead right about the gnome. And to prove that I'm not just saying that because he's my boss, I'm going to say that he was dead wrong about the half-orc. In the same document in which he said we should stop swimming upstream to make a dark gnome, he had this to say about half-orcs:

"Half-Orcs present a problem, as only copious amounts of hand waving can make this race exist without some nod toward the dark tendencies that led to their creation. We have introduced a number of races that replace the better aspects of the half-orc, including tieflings and dragonborn. It's time to let the half-orc fade from the game. (Later in the edition if a better story comes along, we can reexamine this decision.)"

Now, Bill did make some good points in that short paragraph. Tieflings fill the same sort of walk-the-edge, bad-guy psychographic niche that half-orcs have

SIDEBAR: A FEW SMALL TWEAKS

The appendix of the *Monster Manual* contains rules for playing a number of monsters as characters—although those rules are primarily intended to help the DM make NPCs of those races. In order to hold their own against other player character races, races from the Monster Manual need a few tweaks. The gnome didn't need much—just a couple of small things that make it feel more rounded and complete:

Fey Origin: Your ancestors were native to the Feywild, so you are considered a fey creature for the purpose of effects that relate to creature origin.

Master Trickster: Once per encounter, you can use the wizard cantrip *ghost sound* (*Player's Handbook*, page 158) as a minor action.

Trickster's Cunning: You have a +5 racial bonus to saving throws against illusions.

Some races need more tweaking than others. If we ever get around to doing a version of the kobold as a PC race, we'll probably change *shifty* pretty significantly. You'll see more examples of how a PC race is not always the same as a monster race in the *Eberron Player's Guide* this summer.

in the past, and dragonborn fill a similar tough brute role. Forcing players to confront the issues surrounding what could get a human and an orc to produce a half-orc child has never been a fun part of the game.

Ultimately, though, by the time serious work got underway on *Player's Handbook 2*, we were pretty sure it was time to find a story good enough that it would let us reexamine that decision. How could we do a barbarian class without the half-orc? More importantly, how could we do **Eberron** and House Tharashk without the race?

So the mechanical designers who worked on *Player's Handbook 2* came up with the rules they wanted for the race, pretty much trusting that someone would come along and come up with a story that would justify their existence in the game. That job, ultimately, fell to me in my position (at the time) as Lead Story Designer.

With my team at the time, consisting of Rich Baker, Bruce Cordell, and Chris Sims, I kicked a lot of ideas around. At this point, I think it's actually best to turn to the email record:

James: In the shadow of an ancient, evil empire, a savage tribe of humans found unlikely allies in an equally savage orc tribe. Under the leadership of the first generation of half-orcs, this combined tribe found the strength to throw off the empire's yoke and speed its collapse as it rotted from within. The world sank into centuries of darkness and chaos and the alliance of humans and orcs dissolved, but half-orcs remain in the world to this day, a distinct race descended from the fierce warriors who hastened the fall of Zannad. (Zannad, described in *Worlds & Monsters*, is the empire that saw the birth of the yuan-ti.)

Rich: I would sorta like to see a story that involves an evil god somehow . . . maybe those human barbarians turned to the worship of Gruumsh for the power to destroy the hated empire, and Gruumsh decided he'd make himself god of all humans by making half-orcs out of 'em?

In other words, look at half-orcs as a race bred once long ago on purpose that's just carried on since. I'm not sure I buy the humans and orcs getting along well enough for inter-tribe marriages, but if some mighty power of evil was looking for the perfect foot-soldier, well . . . a bit clichéd, but I don't have to think about humans liking orcs in **that** way.

Chris: I agree with Rich on this. The idea that humans, no matter how savage, would "get along" with orcs in "that way" is a huge stretch. It was an eyebrow-raising moment for me when I read the original Eberron, and those orcs and humans had more common ground. Savage humans, to me, would be more likely to kill orcs (in really mean ways) and take their stuff than find common ground with them. Further, in trying times, savage people are less accepting of outsiders, not more. Add evil to the mix, and the prospect of even "separate but equal" cohabitation starts to beggar the imagination.

I think the idea that half-orcs were bred specifically by some powerful third-party is the way to go. Whether this program was created by a mighty wizard, some other figure, or a god, or all three, is immaterial to me. It's a better story than an intertribal "we're both evil and bloodthirsty, so let's breed regardless of the fact that you're ugly and smelly" one. It's a better story than an intertribal "we're desperate but share some common theological ground with you, even though you're ugly and smelly" one. That the wizard/god program story is a bit clichéd also doesn't matter to me—it's still a better story.

On the flip side, I have trouble with the idea that Gruumsh would come up with this plan. Humans that turned to worship of Gruumsh and gave him the idea—now that could work for me. I'd like to see such half-orcs in superior positions in orc tribes, as bad guys. Gruumsh favors the strong and capable and destructive, not just the orc.

You also still have the option Logan Bonner came up with long ago, which has the virtue of being original and unlike the tiefling story:

Gruumsh and Corellon fought in the world, and Corellon cut out Gruumsh's eye. The eye came to earth in human lands, and "corrupted the blood" of those that lived there. They became the first half-

orcs, and like that of all immortals (see tiefling) the blood of Gruumsh breeds true. Whomever a half-orc mates with, the child is half-orc. The change in the humans' blood didn't change their hearts, though, which means half-orcs can be billed as no worse than humans except for their fierceness. So, half-orc is a misnomer, really, but it's a name that stuck over the ages. (And this still leaves room for evil half-orcs that lord over orc tribes.)

One thing that's really important to me is that half-orcs be prettier than they were in any other edition. I don't mean real pretty, but I do mean not so ugly that it's impossible to imagine a really handsome one passing for human.

James: I don't want to directly involve Gruumsh or any severed part of him, because Gruumsh is not an orc. An infusion of Gruumshiness wouldn't make humans into half-orcs. Plenty of humans worship Gruumsh without turning into half-orcs.

Rather than veer too much toward Saruman, I'd propose that we turn to a race we've already described as interested in breeding programs: hobgoblins. An ancient hobgoblin empire, in an effort to bring wayward orc tribes under their control, bred half-orcs to act as client chieftains. This angle reinforces:

(a) hobgoblins as empire-builders, at least in the past

(b) hobgoblins as breeders

(c) half-orcs as potential leaders of orcs

(d) half-orcs as more soldierly and civilized than orcs—more like hobgoblins, in other words—which supports them as better fighters and rogues than barbarians.

It's probably worth saying that whatever the hobgoblins did to create these guys, the half-orc quality breeds true, as Chris suggests.

Into the Book

That idea made its way into the *PH2* draft in this form:

When an ancient empire of hobgoblins sought to subjugate neighboring orc tribes, the hobgoblins turned to the same technique they used to create beasts of war. Combining the strength and savagery of orcs with the decisive action of humans, the hobgoblins bred half-orcs to seize control of the orc tribes and rule them in the empire's name. Long after the fall of the hobgoblin nation, half-orcs remain in the world as they were created: a race of fierce warriors that combines the best of two worlds.

Then came a story team meeting, where ultimately I realized that it just didn't feel right. It seemed like it would read very strangely to established D&D players, despite all the qualities it had to recommend it. Feeling a bit like a waffle, I crafted this paragraph to replace the one above:

An obscure legend claims that when Corellon put out Gruumsh's eye in their primeval battle, part of the savage god's essence fell to earth, where it transformed a race of humans into fierce half-orcs. Another story suggests that an ancient hobgoblin empire created half-orcs to lead orc tribes on the empire's behalf. Yet another legend claims that a tribe of brutal human barbarians chose to breed with orcs to strengthen their bloodline. Some claim that Kord created half-orcs, copying the best elements from the human and orc races to make a strong and fierce people after his own heart. If you ask a half-orc about his origin, you might hear one of these stories. You might also get a punch in the face for asking such a rude question.

I was half-tempted to end with: *That's just how half-orcs roll.*

But I didn't.

The rest of the race entry focuses on them as a race that combines the best qualities of human and orc with a couple of other qualities that came along for the ride, without dwelling on their origin. The assumption is that half-orc adventurers have half-orc parents.

By presenting these various possibilities, we hint that there's an unpleasant reality that people don't like to talk about, but we also offer some solid suggestions for origins that might be true in any given DM's world. And we end with a reminder of why people play half-orcs—to be badass brutes who start bar fights at the smallest provocation.

At least, that's why *I* play half-orcs.

About the Authors

James Wyatt is the D&D® Design Manager for Wizards of the Coast Roleplaying R&D. He was one of the lead designers for 4th Edition D&D and the primary author of the 4th Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide®*. He was one of the designers of the *Eberron® Campaign Setting* and is the author of several Eberron novels.

Hail to the Player-in-Chief

BY SHELLY MAZZANOBLE
illustrations by William O'Conner

We were deep beneath The Happy Beggar, a bed and breakfast for the downtrodden run by a sweet, retired, paladin couple, when I decided I needed a career change. This particular encounter was hard, and Tabitha was having her wizard's robes handed to her by an aggro shadar-kai and a pantload of dark creepers. There were no minions in sight, and we were grossly outnumbered. Additionally the room was so tiny that there was no way you weren't in spitting distance of at least two enemies.

"This encounter is broken," Scott said. "We're getting our butts kicked."

"This is a perfectly appropriate encounter for your level," New DM said, so smug and confident he might as well have painted his face and waved a foam finger in the air chanting, "TPK! TPK! TPK!"

"It does seem a little more aggressive than usual," Marty said.

"Well, again," said New DM, "sometimes that happens."

Right. Good advice, New DM. Thanks for clarifying. Tabitha's hit points were down to single digits, which is unheard of for my cautious wizard. Aggressive was an understatement.

"I'm going to use *scorching burst* on that gaggle of creepers," I announced to the group.

"Uh, no you're not," New DM told me. "You can't see that far ahead of you, remember?"

Oh, yeah, how could I forget? Tabitha's line of sight was limited to 2 squares thanks to the witchy shadar-kai who blasted her with *beshadowed mind*. The creepers were 3 squares away.

I'd already used two of my encounter spells and wasn't going to risk using my daily if I couldn't see the target.

"Then I'll use *burning hands*," I said. Limited sight be damned! I could do that spell with my eyes closed.

"If you do that, you'll hit Aaeon and Teemu," New DM warned. "Which is totally fine by me."

"You can hit me," Kierin said, throwing Aaeon into my hot, little hands. "I can take it."

"You mind, Teemu?" I asked Scott.

"Yeah, I mind!" he shouted. "I'm bloodied from these bastard creepers. I don't need to take any crap from you."

"So duck," I told him.

"He can't *duck*," New DM said. Always the wet blanket.

"He can if I tell him to."

"First of all, *ducking*, or dropping prone, would be

a minor action and it's not his turn. Second, the dark creepers would hear you say 'duck' and they would do it, too. And third and most importantly, ducking in an area spell doesn't help your Reflex defense or magically whisk you out of the power's area, so it's all really pretty pointless."

"Fine! I'll just toss out a stupid *magic missile*. Fingers crossed everyone."

It didn't hit, and don't even get me started on *that*.

I've always suspected New DM took liberties with the rules and never to our favor. But what are we supposed to do about it? He works in R&D. It's highly possible *this* alleged new rule or mechanic or *that* new monster was called into action minutes before our game. They probably come up with this stuff while waiting for their microwave popcorn to pop.

Worse is how R&D sticks together like taffy. I'm always ratting out New DM to his co-workers, and they just smile and say something innocuous like, "Sounds fun!"

It's not fun, and neither is watching your fellow adventurers roll high teens on their attacks and still miss.

"That's a lie!" Sara called out. "No way does 19 not hit them!"

"Stop cheating, New DM," I warned him. "Karma is going to get you."

"And this dark creeper is going to get you," he told Tabitha. "Does 26 hit your Armor Class?" He laughed when he asked this, because he well knows this not only hits Tabitha's Armor Class, it practically knocks her out of her boots. "That's 7 points of damage."

"Oh no!" I shouted. "Tabitha is down to 1 hit point!"

It was then that Bill Slavicsek, Director for RPG R&D, came to visit. He does this once in a while and it always turns us into paycheck-starved paparazzi stalking an A-lister at a courthouse.

"Bill, tell us! Why can't I trade my minor action for two standard actions?" Sara asked.

"Bill! Isn't *ducking* an interrupt action?" Scott demanded.

"Say it isn't so, Bill! Can New DM really make me *tell him* when I have my *shield* up?" I asked. "Can't we just assume Tabitha uses it anytime there are daggers flying around?"

"Isn't it an encounter power?" Bill asked.

"Yes."

"Did you already use it in this encounter?"

"Well ... kind of."

"Then no, you can't assume you always have it up. It's good for one turn."

"That's a lame *shield*, Squishy," Scott said, stating the obvious. "That's like having an umbrella that disintegrates when it gets wet."

It's nothing like that, but more importantly, why was he getting mad at *me*. I'll tell you. It's because whenever two or more members of R&D get together it's like the rest of us get caught in a cloud of *turn on your allies*.

Bill's proud smile was like a figurative pat on New DM's head. "Sounds like you're in good hands here." It's clear Bill was proud of the tizzy his little minion has stirred up. Good hands? Ha! New DM's hands are the devil's workshop.

It made me think that with D&D, you're either a Dungeon Master or you're fighting for your life against them. When did it become so perilous to be a player?

Our game ended with Tabitha barely hanging on. Marty whispered a *majestic word* that got her back into double digits—more than enough to finish out the fight. But Tabitha wasn't the only one to leave that encounter inspired. As soon as I got back to my

desk, I sent Bill an email to set up a meeting.

"It's urgent," I wrote. "The future of D&D rests on this meeting."

Bill wrote back right away. "Sure. Come down anytime tomorrow. My door's always open when the future of D&D is at stake."

And thus my new career was set into motion. The players needed a voice. Someone to stand up to those maniacs in R&D who spend all day crafting scenarios full of pitfalls, traps, and beasts with super powers. They're out to get us! But fear not, D&D Players of the World! I've got your back. And somewhere in R&D, there's going to be a cubicle with my nameplate on it.

I woke up the next morning with an odd feeling in my stomach. It could have been a result of all that brownie batter I consumed while concocting desk-warming treats for my soon-to-be new co-workers. Maybe there is something to that raw egg warning. But it was more likely anxiety. Today was sure to be a momentous day in the history of D&D. The People were counting on me. I would not let them down.

My soon-to-be-ex-coworkers noticed the paper plates and matching napkins on my desk and started sniffing around.

"What's in there?" Marty asked, pointing to the mound of tin foil.

"Oh, nothing, just my lunch."

"That's a mighty big veggie burger," Scott said, poking at it.

"I'm trying to increase my protein intake," I said. "Please stop touching it."

"Is that powdered sugar or do we need to have an intervention?" Kierin asked.

"Fine. If you must know, I'm interviewing with R&D today," I told them. "It's been fun working with you guys."

"Interviewing for what position?" Scott asked. "Senior Sugar Pusher?"

"Personal shopper?" Marty added.

"Celebrity blogger?" Kierin suggested.

Clearly they were jealous, and their sullenness was meant to veil their sadness at losing me to R&D.

"I'm going to be the voice of The People," I told them. "The Player-in-Chief, if you will."

"I won't," Scott said. "But good luck with that."

"I won't either," said Marty. "But make sure to come back and visit once in a while."

"I would love to, but I'll probably be really busy in my new position. Maybe we could schedule a lunch or something."

"But R&D is one floor down," Marty reminded me. "That's like sixteen stairs. It's not as if you need a malaria shot and a passport to get there."

"More importantly," Scott added, "Your 'new' position doesn't even exist. Your buddies in R&D are humoring you in exchange for baked goods. That sounds fair."

Funny they were laughing about having a Player-in-Chief on their side, but I bet that once they see my changes hit the playmat, they'll be thanking me.

I know a lot of hard work went into 4th Edition, and I'm not one to poo-poo someone's blood, sweat, and tears. Well, at least I wasn't until yesterday. But it wasn't hard to come up with things I felt The People would want fixed. I'd been keeping a list since we started playtesting 4th Edition.

Bill, being a man of his word, welcomed me into his office when he found me camped outside of it.

Contrary to what some might say, I am not afraid of Bill Slavicsek. *Afraid* implies I would not want to ride alone in an elevator with him, and I have no problem with that. In fact, I'd much rather be riding in an elevator with him than sitting across his desk with a plate of brownies on my lap. Okay, maybe I am a little afraid of Bill.

"I hope you weren't waiting long," he said. "I didn't realize we had a meeting."

"Time is of no consequence, Bill," I told him. "Not when the future of D&D is at stake."

"I appreciate your dedication," Bill said.

That's the thing about these R&Ders. They are nice and welcoming, and they really are appreciative. But I won't be fooled! That's part of their guise! Their warmth and generosity are mere breadcrumbs in the Ambush Forest. *Keep your eyes open* ...

"What? Why?" Bill asked, looking around his office.

"Why what?"

"You told me to keep my eyes open."

"That's right, Bill. I meant keep your eyes open for the new voice of the people. Brownie?" I asked him, holding up the plate.

"You brought baked goods?"

"Sure. Doesn't everyone who interviews with you?"

Bill shook his head and smiled. "Interviews? Not everyone, no."

Ha! This job will be easier to get than a bloodied minion with one foot in a bear trap.

"Well, technically my job experience might not be applicable to game development, but baking is one of my skills. Consider this my resume."

"Are you applying for a job?" Bill asked, biting into the brownie.

"Indeed! But I'm not applying for just any job," I said. "I created it. You're looking at the new Player-in-Chief."

Bill stared across the desk at me, making me wish we were in the elevator again.

"Or Director of Player Experiences works too."

Still no response.

"How about Player-Developer Liaison?"

Finally I got a reaction. "I see. Maybe you could tell me a little about this position?"

I was practicing this speech on the way to work today. "I almost lost my little wizard yesterday," I began. "The only possible explanation for this madness is that your R&D team is going off the rails and creating rules that do nothing but put PCs in jeopardy."

"Combat is sometimes perilous," Bill said. "That's what makes the game exciting."

Seriously, this whole "sometimes that's life" mantra is getting tired. What am I? A teenager?

"You know, it doesn't have to be just about running for your life," I told him. "I spent half of third grade pretending to have a dentist appointment at

2:50 so I could beat it out of school before the the Three Meankateers."

"Meankateers?"

"You want to create some monsters? How about designing a pack of 8-year-old girls? But I don't want to talk about them. What I do want to talk about are some ways in which we can make D&D better."

"Such as?"

"Familiars," I begin, pulling out my ten-page list. "No one should be denied a familiar. I mean, unless they have a criminal background or a history of animal neglect."

"All arcane characters can have a familiar now."

"And that's a step in the right direction, but I think you downplay some of the benefits of having one. Studies have shown that familiar owners live longer, have less stress, and fewer heart attacks than people who don't own familiars."

"Weird," Bill noted. "A similar study was conducted on pet ownership."

"Add to that the fact that people seem to trust you more if you've demonstrated an ability to care for another living creature," I continued. "Therefore, familiars can offer bonuses for healing, Diplomacy, and even Perception if they're properly trained."

"What if it's a bat?" he asked

"So?"

"You think people would still trust you if you walked into Trader Joe's with a bat on your shoulder."

"Pugs are ugly but they're still dogs," I said. "Who am I to discriminate? Bats need nurturing, too."

Bill nodded his head and kept smiling, which I took to be a good sign.

"Did you ever wonder what happens to familiars when their masters die?" I asked.

"No."

"There's got to be thousands wandering around out there alone."

"Sad," Bill said.

"How about a website so PCs can adopt homeless familiars. We can call it Familiar Finder!"

"Of course."

"And then there's treasure. I have a serious issue with it."

Bill began typing what I could only assume was an email to Facilities asking that my computer and phone be delivered to the third floor. "Uh-huh."

"Every time we find loot, it's chock full of weapons Tabitha can't wield and armor she can't wear. If I unearth another piece of dwarven chainmail, I'll find a use for that battleaxe and it won't be pretty."

"Hmm ... don't do that."

I go on. "Why can't there be a pair of magical boots or some bracers or, better yet, a gift certificate so Tabitha can buy something she really wants?"

"We do offer gift certificates. In a way," Bill said, turning away from the computer and back to me. "While there may be a certain number of gold pieces and a few potions, there's also, say, a level 6 magic item of the DM's choosing."

"So New DM is holding out on me?"

"Sounds like it," Bill said. I hope this will be reflected on New DM's next performance review. "We encourage the Dungeon Master to ask the players for a wish list of magic items. It's not guaranteed you'll get them, but it makes it easier for the DM to decide what you'll find."

Interesting. I seem to remember New DM sending out an email to this effect that I quickly filed away in the "Pointless Requests from New DM" folder.

This next one is a major source of contention. "What about the ability to call the DM's bluff?" I asked. "You know, for those times when New DM isn't following the rules."

"The rules are meant to be guidelines," said Bill. "We do allow the Dungeon Master a certain level of freedom."

What? That's preposterous and totally goes against my rule-abiding sensitivity. "All that time and effort that went into creating the core rulebooks and you're saying you don't care if people follow them?"

Bill shrugged. "D&D is supposed to be fun. Rules are subjective. They can't possibly appeal to everyone."

"Clearly I have my work cut out for me," I said.

"As whacky as they are," Bill said, "not *all* of your ideas are bad. Sounds like you have a lot to talk about with the team."

That had to be the verbal equivalent of rolling a natural 20. I hadn't even gotten to The Soap Opera Effect or Power Naps or skill challenges associated with shopping. A smattering of "not all bad ideas" can only mean one thing.

Then Bill's phone rang, and I expected it was my former boss begging him to recant the job offer. But it was too late. The People had spoken.

Bill covered the mouthpiece with one hand and pointed at the receiver with the other. "Sorry. I need to take this."

"Sure, Bill! So it's okay if I start moving my desk? You guys could use some plant life down here."

Bill smiled while returning to his phone call. "Uh, sure, whatever you want," he said. "Go forth and conquer for The People."

I had so much to do! Decide on my job title; figure out what to bake next; plan my new wardrobe; set up meetings with R&D. The future of D&D was at stake. And I was going to save it.

TO BE CONTINUED ...

About the Author

Shelly Mazzanoble is much too busy with her new job as Player-in-Chief to write a proper bio.

Name Level

by Bart Carroll and Steve Winters

In the earliest versions of D&D® and AD&D®, every class had a different name associated with it at each level. Your character wasn't a 3rd-level fighter, he was a swordsman; he wasn't a 5th-level magic-user, he was a thaumaturgist. If that doesn't mean anything to you, then you started playing with 2nd Edition AD&D or later.

These names didn't have any specific impact on the game, but they provided a splash of color to what was otherwise a fairly mundane piece of game machinery. They also introduced the concept of "name level."

Name level was the point at which your level name 'topped out.' In some cases, your level name and class name matched at that point—but that didn't apply across the board, which led to confusion about where the term came from. In fact, there's no clear answer about the origin of the term. Some people say that it's because of the collision of class and level names; others will tell you that it's the level where a character finally made a name for himself and came to the attention of the powers that be. The truth probably is a combination of both hypotheses. The literal term "name level" appears on page 8 of the Dungeons & Dragons® *Player's Companion* (1984); that's its first use in print in a rulebook that we've tracked down. (If you know of an earlier appearance, let us know! Sadly, even we don't have a complete set of D&D rulebooks from the '70s and '80s.)

Shown below are the level names from OD&D (the original version of D&D as published in 1974), the D&D Expert rulebook from 1981, and the AD&D *Player's Handbook* from 1978. These lists have significant differences, mostly because of the changing number of classes. The OD&D list, for example, covers

Original D&D

Level	Fighter	Magic-User	Cleric
1	Veteran	Medium	Acolyte
2	Warrior	Seer	Adept
3	Swordsman	Conjurer	Village Priest
4	Hero	Theurgist	Vicar
5	Swashbuckler	Thaumaturgist	Curate
6	Myrmidon	Magician	Bishop
7	Champion	Enchanter	Lama
8	Superhero	Warlock	PATRIARCH
9	LORD	Sorcerer	–
10	–	Necromancer	–
11	–	WIZARD	–

D&D Expert Rules

Level	Cleric	Fighter	Magic-User	Thief
1	Acolyte	Veteran	Medium	Apprentice
2	Adept	Warrior	Seer	Footpad
3	Priest	Swordmaster	Conjuror	Robber
4	Vicar	Hero	Magician	Burglar
5	Curate	Swashbuckler	Enchanter	Cutpurse
6	Elder	Myrmidon	Warlock	Sharper
7	Bishop	Champion	Sorceror	Pilferer
8	Lama	Superhero	Necromancer	Thief
9	PATRIARCH	LORD	WIZARD	MASTER THIEF

Level	Dwarf	Elf	Halfling
1	Dwarven Veteran	Medium/Veteran	Halfling Veteran
2	Dwarven Warrior	Seer/Warrior	Halfling Warrior
3	Dwarven Swordmaster	Conjuror/Swordmaster	Halfling Swordmaster
4	Dwarven Hero	Magician/Hero	Halfling Hero
5	Dwarven Swashbuckler	Enchanter/Swashbuckler	Halfling Swashbuckler
6	Dwarven Myrmidon	Warlock/Myrmidon	Halfling Myrmidon
7	Dwarven Champion	Sorceror/Champion	Halfling Champion
8	Dwarven Superhero	Necromancer/Super-Hero	SHERIFF
9	DWARVEN LORD	WIZARD/LORD	(no further levels)

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AD&D

Level	Cleric	Druid	Paladin	Fighter	Ranger
1	Acolyte	Aspirant	Gallant	Veteran	Runner
2	Adept	Ovate	Keeper	Warrior	Strider
3	Priest	Initiate of the 1st Circle	Protector	Swordsman	Scout
4	Curate	Initiate of the 2nd Circle	Defender	Hero	Courser
5	Curate	Initiate of the 3rd Circle	Warder	Swashbuckler	Tracker
6	Canon	Initiate of the 4th Circle	Guardian	Myrmidon	Guide
7	Lama	Initiate of the 5th Circle	Chevalier	Champion	Pathfinder
8	PATRIARCH	Initiate of the 6th Circle	Justiciar	Superhero	Ranger
9	High Priest	Initiate of the 7th Circle	PALADIN	LORD	Ranger Knight
10	–	Initiate of the 8th Circle	–	–	RANGER LORD
11	–	Initiate of the 9th Circle	–	–	–
12	–	DRUID	–	–	–
13	–	Archdruid	–	–	–
14	–	The Great Druid	–	–	–

Level	Magic-User	Illusionist	Thief	Assassin	Monk
1	Prestidigitator	Prestidigitator	Rogue (Apprentice)	Bravo (Apprentice)	Novice
2	Evoker	Minor Trickster	Footpad	Rutterkin	Initiate
3	Conjurer	Trickster	Cutpurse	Waghalter	Brother
4	Theurgist	Master Trickster	Robber	Murderer	Disciple
5	Thaumaturgist	Cabalist	Burglar	Thug	Immaculate
6	Magician	Visionist	Filcher	Killer	Master
7	Enchanter	Phantasmist	Sharper	Cutthroat	Superior Master
8	Warlock	Apparitionist	Magsman	Executioner	MASTER OF DRAGONS
9	Sorcerer	Spellbinder	THIEF	Assassin	–
10	Necromancer	ILLUSIONIST	–	Expert Assassin	–
11	WIZARD	–	–	Senior Assassin	–
12	–	–	–	Chief Assassin	–
13	–	–	–	Prime Assassin	–
14	–	–	–	GUILDMASTER ASSASSIN	–

only fighters, magic-users, and clerics, since those were the only classes available in the original game. The 4th class, thief, didn't appear until the GREYHAWK® supplement. In OD&D, no further advancement was possible beyond name level—the experience charts stopped at these points (until expanded charts came out in GREYHAWK, that is). On later lists, the progression usually continued past name level by adding the level itself to the name. For example, a 9th-level fighter in AD&D was a Lord; at 10th level, he became simply a Lord (10th level).

Name level was a turning point for PCs. One way or another, an important decision was required. Originally, it was the point at which characters could build a castle, temple, tower, guild, and so on, and begin recruiting their own force of loyal followers. (Actually, in OD&D, PCs could build a stronghold whenever they were able to afford it. The level restriction came later.) Beyond that, name level was the point at which *they were expected to do so.* Possessing great power and reputation (and treasure) meant manning up and taking responsibility for making the world a better place. Building a fortified manor, a temple, or a magical "observation post" on the borderland extends the reach of safety and civilization. It also gives a high-level character a safe base of operation for expeditions into even more dangerous territory.

AD&D upped the ante from simple stronghold-building to incorporate all sorts of turning points appropriate to the class.

- ✦ Clerics could build temples and attract worshipers and low-level priests.
- ✦ Fighters could build strongholds and attract low-level soldiers.
- ✦ Rangers didn't build strongholds but they could attract 2-24 followers.
- ✦ Paladins didn't build strongholds or attract followers, but they could begin casting cleric spells.
- ✦ Wizards and illusionists could build towers and begin enchanting magic items.
- ✦ Thieves and assassins could build secret lairs and start their own thieves' and assassins' guilds. Doing so triggered a war with whatever guild already operated in the area, a conflict that could be settled only by wiping out the other guild's leadership. What's more, the assassin could reach that point only by assassinating the head of his own guild, who undoubtedly was well aware of the

danger posed by the up-and-coming executioner and would take steps to protect himself—probably by eliminating the threat outright. High-level assassins spent much of their time looking over their shoulders.

- ✦ Druids and monks were special cases. Druids didn't build strongholds in the normal sense, but they could take up residence in a particularly serene or secure woodland glen. They could not, however, actually advance to 12th level until they defeated one of the nine (there were always nine) 12th-level druids already occupying the inner circle. Losing this duel meant losing all the experience points gained as an 11th-level druid and starting over on the path to reaching 12th level. Every advance beyond level 11 meant fighting and defeating a fellow druid in either magical or physical combat—and the occasional 11th-level challenger to deal with! Monks followed more or less the same routine. On becoming Master of Dragons, they had to face the current Master in a one-on-one match. If the challenger won, he took control of the master's monastery and attracted new monks as followers.

Reaching name level signaled an important change in the tenor of the campaign, because the PCs were no longer responsible for just themselves. They had townsfolk and parishioners to worry about, or a clandestine war to wage, or usurpers and challengers to watch out for. When heading out on adventures, they were accompanied by small armies of retainers and disciples, which allowed them to tackle very different types of challenges from before.

These new responsibilities and challenges brought about drastic changes in the tone of a campaign—so drastic that many groups just ignored them and kept embarking on the same foot-loose, responsibility-free adventures they always had, only at higher and higher levels. Unfortunately, early versions of *D&D* weren't very well geared for high-level play. Many of the races had limits that flat-out prevented them from advancing beyond low double-digit levels (those got ignored, too). What's worse, the game's underlying math simply broke down or, at best, became unwieldy as characters rose above level 15. A lot of effort was poured into supporting that type of play—epic-level handbooks and such—with varying degrees of success. As always, a good DM made all the difference.

Changing the campaign's emphasis toward managing a temple, fiefdom, or guild was an excellent alternative for dealing with those high-level problems. Assuming you built your stronghold, you had to decide whether to keep playing that character with all of his or her new responsibilities or ease your beloved PC into a well-earned retirement as an important NPC/patron and start up a new character. It was even possible to have the best of both worlds—start a new character who serves the old one (as one of those newly recruited soldiers, acolytes, or apprentices) but occasionally bring the old hero out of retirement for an epic adventure.

Level names disappeared from AD&D when it made the transition to 2nd Edition. The chief reason was that, as the game expanded into power levels well beyond its original conception and the number of classes and subclasses grew, coming up with more level names that weren't just silly became harder and harder. It was an element that could restrain the game's growth without adding anything substantial in return, so it was dropped. Along with them went much of what set name level apart from other levels.

In 4th edition, the ghost of name level haunts the battlements in the form of paragon paths and epic destinies. They aren't quite the same as carving a new barony out of the wilderness or challenging the King of Thieves to a turf war, but they do signal major changes in the tone of the campaign and the challenges awaiting the PCs. Think about that the next time you're faced with the choice between becoming a demigod or an eternal seeker.

About the Author

Bart Carroll is loathsome beyond description and has no redeeming features. His body resembles that of a huge, bloated buffalo and gives off an offensive odor. The author's neck is long and thin, and perched atop it is a big head uglier than that of a warthog. His legs are thick and stumpy, much like a hippopotamus. The author's tail is strong and snakey, however, and moves with amazing swiftness to strike enemies.

Steve Winter is a writer, game designer, and web producer living in the Seattle area. He's been involved with publishing D&D® in one form or another since 1981. Tiny people and monsters made of plastic and lead are among his favorite obsessions.

Living Forgotten Realms FAQ

BY CHRIS TULACH
illustrations by Eric L. Williams

At D&D Experience this past month and on the official forums, a number of questions regarding Living Forgotten Realms play kept popping up. This FAQ should address some of those questions. When the next iteration of the RPGA Character Creation Guide is available, this information will be integrated into that document.

Q. I heard that there are new power cards in the *Player's Handbook Heroes* miniatures product. Are these powers legal for play?
A. Yes, the powers found in the *Player's Handbook Heroes* sets are legal for RPGA play on the date of the product's release (April 21).

Q. The gnome receives a full racial write-up in *Player's Handbook 2*. I have the Gnome Wanderer creation card on my character, which allows my gnome PC to use the rules in the *Monster Manual* for my race. What happens when *Player's Handbook 2* releases?
A. On March 17, when *Player's Handbook 2* releases, all characters that have been using the Gnome Wanderer card must remove that card from their stack. Use the gnome racial write-up presented in *Player's Handbook 2*, making any needed changes to the character based on that write-up. Note that in order to take the gnome racial feats, you must retrain out other feats when you level up (one feat per level gained). You can fill your now empty card slot with any other legal Rewards card.

Q. The shadar-kai gets its write-up in *Dragon* Magazine. Will the same procedure apply to it as the gnome?
A. Yes.

Q. *Veteran's armor* changed significantly in the recent update. Is there any way I can get rid of it without just selling it for 20% of its value?

A. Veteran's armor (from *Adventurer's Vault*) changed very significantly in a recent update to the rules. For this magic item only, you may remove it from your list of found items and select another found item you have access to of equal or lesser value to the suit of veteran's armor you selected. For example, if you selected +1 veteran's armor (2nd-level magic item), you could remove it and take any other accessible 1st- or 2nd-level magic item. Since the adventures with veteran's armor have been updated, you may only exercise this option if you played an adventure with veteran's armor prior to February 1, 2009.

Q. Are the preview classes presented in *Dragon* Magazine playable in the RPGA?

A. As stated in the RPGA Character Creation Guide, playable classes must appear in the compiled issue of *Dragon Magazine* in order to be legal for RPGA play. If the class is not in the compiled issue, feel free to give it a test drive in your home games, but it's not legal for RPGA play until its rules source is released. Of course, if it is in the compiled issue of *Dragon Magazine* released at the end of each month, you can go ahead and start playing the class at that time.

New Living Forgotten Realms Adventures Releasing This Month

Check out the latest adventure offerings from the **RPGA**!

February 4, 2009

MOON1-3 Black Gold

Dirty Barnison got his treasure: a mysterious, almost invisible, metallic stone of some unknown substance. A visitor from a far-away land now asks you to help him find more of it and is willing to pay top price for your effort. A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in The Moonshae Isles for characters levels 7–10.

February 11, 2009

IMPI1-3 Lost Souls

Even in a place like Impiltur, not all are corrupt. Some bright souls still strive to help the defenseless and weak, but there is always something dark ready to extinguish what little light remains. Or is there more going on when you hear the screams of terror coming from the shrine of Ilmater and the poorhouse behind? A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in Impiltur for characters levels 7–10.

CORE1-7 Sovereign of the Mines

Someone is interfering with valuable shipments from the mining community of Ioma Town. Production is way down, and the rulers of Amn aren't pleased. The evidence indicates that it's an inside job ... deep inside. Adventurers are needed to go into the mines and find out who (or what) is sabotaging the Iomic Crystals. A Living Forgotten Realms adventure for characters levels 7–10 set in the Nelanther Isles.

February 18, 2009

WATE1-3 The Woolmen's Restless Tomb

A rich Waterdhavian guild wants to lay its former guildmaster to rest in lavish ceremony, but the guild tomb is occupied by undead. Adventurers are sought to clear out the undead and discover clues as to how they came to be there. A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in Waterdeep for characters levels 7–10.

February 25, 2009

AKAN1-3 Property for Sale

Trinkets and gold pieces are not the only revenue involved in clearing out a dungeon. Sometimes the dungeon itself is worth a hefty sum. A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in Akanûl for characters levels 7–10.

See you next month!

About the Author

Originally thought to have been raised from a humble Midwestern family, **Chris Tulach** actually fell to Earth in a meteorite-shaped capsule flung from a planet far outside our galaxy. While under the yellow rays of Sol, Chris's nerdity far surpasses that of any normal human. Using this precious gift only for good, he has become the RPGA® Content Designer, responsible for the development and deployment of Dungeons & Dragons® organized play programs.

Wizards and Worlds

by Bill Slavicsek

This month, I want to spend most of the column treating D&D Insiders to a look at elements from a couple of upcoming products -- Eberron Campaign Guide and Arcane Power Sourcebook. This is the first time we're making details about the wizard's summoner build available, and we're showing off an epic threat that can cause trouble in an Eberron or any D&D campaign. I also want to bring you up to speed on our ongoing plans for supporting our various D&D worlds -- support that's exclusive to D&D Insider.

D&D Character Builder Goes Live!

As I write this, the D&D Character Builder has been live for four days, and so far everything is working well. It's a useful and easy-to-use program that makes character creation and management insanely simple and, more important, really fun! I want to thank everyone who has been working long and hard to get this application ready for prime time. I'm even using it for the new campaign that James Wyatt just started running, and of course most of my players in my two campaigns are using it, too. This is a living application. We're going to continually update it and make improvements, so I invite all of you to use it and send us information on any bugs you run into and any suggestions you have for making this amazing application even better.

Worlds Support

The *D&D Insider* team is putting the finishing touches on the plan for supporting our current D&D campaign worlds, *Forgotten Realms* and *Eberron*. Starting in May, you'll find at least one adventure or support article for these settings in every issue of *Dragon Magazine* and *Dungeon Magazine*. New locations, new monsters, new feats, new magic items, and more will roll out on a regular basis as we expand these campaign worlds for 4th Edition. This material, while written to be used in a specific campaign setting, can also be used to add new elements to whatever *D&D* campaign you happen to be playing in.

For the *Forgotten Realms* campaign, we start off the first in a series of articles detailing a major city. We're hoping that future installments of this series will be a breeding ground for new authors drawn from among *D&D Insiders*. For the *Eberron* campaign, we kick things off by detailing a lightning rail line. What's better than having a raging battle within and atop a speeding lightning rail?

EBERRON CAMPAIGN GUIDE SNEAK PEEK

Now let's take a look at some of the cool things you'll find in the *Eberron Campaign Guide*, releasing in June. As co-designer and creative director of the original *Eberron* Campaign Setting, I have a great love of this unique setting. James Wyatt has done a great job (along with Keith Baker and a fabulous group of designers, developers, and editors) to bring the setting into 4th Edition. I'm showing off the new cartography from the book, which I think is just gorgeous, as well as previewing an epic threat in the form of this NPC.

Mordain the FleshweaverOne of the most powerful wizards in Eberron is also one of the world's most terrifying mortals. Mordain the Fleshweaver, the subject of dark fireside tales, lives in exile in western Droaam. Though the Twelve have tried to imprison Mordain for his attempts to master the magic of the daelkyr, few have the power to directly oppose him.

Mordain the Fleshweaver — Level 21 Elite Controller
Medium aberrant humanoid, elf — XP 6,400

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +17; all-around vision, darkvision
HP 338; **Bloodied** 169; see also *fleshweaver's resurgence*
Regeneration 15 (if Mordain takes cold and radiant damage, regeneration does not function until the end of his next turn)
AC 35; **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 33
Immune disease, polymorph
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8; teleport 5
Action Points 1

Stinging Tentacle (standard; at-will)
Reach 3; +26 vs. AC; 2d8 + 2 damage, and the target is slowed and takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends both). If the target is already slowed, it is dazed instead.

Unraveling Ray (standard; at-will)
Ranged 20; +24 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 7 damage, Mordain pushes the target 1 square, and the target takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends).
Aftereffect: Ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Fleshweaver's Fury (standard; at-will)
Mordain makes two basic attacks.

Burrowing Shard (standard; recharge ⚅)
Ranged 20; +24 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 damage, and the target is immobilized and takes ongoing 15 damage (save ends both).
Aftereffect: The target takes ongoing 5 damage and is slowed (save ends both).

Unnatural Presence (standard; encounter) ✦ **Fear**
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +22 vs. Will; the target is stunned until the end of Mordain's next turn.
Aftereffect: The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against Mordain (save ends).

Xoriat Storm (standard; encounter) ✦ **Psychic, Zone**
Close burst 3; targets enemies; +24 vs. Will; 2d6 psychic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).
Effect: The area of the burst becomes a zone until the end of Mordain's next turn. Any creature that starts its turn within the zone is subject to an attack; +24 vs. Will; 2d6 psychic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).
Sustain Minor: The zone persists.

Change Shape (minor; at-will) ✦ **Polymorph**
Mordain can alter his physical form to take on the appearance of any Small or Medium humanoid, including a unique individual (see MM 280).

Fleshweaver's Resurgence (when Mordain is reduced to 0 hit points in a round in which he did not take cold and radiant damage; encounter) ✦ **Healing**
Mordain returns to life with 30 hit points at the start of his next turn.

Resistance to Scrying
Attempts to scry upon Mordain, his location, or objects in his possession fail as if the target of the attempt did not exist.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech, Elven, Goblin
Skills Arcana +23, Dungeoneering +22, Insight +17, Nature +17
Str 14 (+12) **Dex** 17 (+13) **Wis** 14 (+12)
Con 23 (+16) **Int** 27 (+18) **Cha** 22 (+16)
Equipment robes

Mordain Lore

History DC 22: Near Droaam's border with the Shadow Marches, Mordain's Hall reaches into the sky like a massive, malformed arm. The area that surrounds it is filled with foulspawn and other horrors of Mordain's own creation. His servants search constantly for ancient daelkyr sites within Droaam and the Shadow Marches, and some say that the mad mage hopes to reopen the gates to Xoriat.

History DC 27: More than two centuries ago, Mordain d'Phiarlan was one of the Twelve, but the ambitious mage began delving into the Lore of the Closed Circle of Sharn, choosing to experiment with the magic of the daelkyr. Though he was captured, tried, and petrified in order to expedite his trip to the prison island of Dreadhold, Mordain escaped.

Mordain's Tactics

Mordain first uses *unnatural presence* on his foes, then spends an action point to call forth a *Xoriat storm*. He sustains that power as long as possible while he makes *burrowing shard* attacks. While waiting for that power to recharge, he makes *unraveling ray* or *stinging tentacle* attacks with *fleshweaver's fury*.

Arcane Power Sneak Peek

The wizard gets a big boost with the release of *Arcane Power* in April. Here's a sneak peek at the heroic tier powers available to the new wizard build, the summoner.

New Keyword: Summoning

Powers that have the summoning keyword bring creatures from other planes to serve you in a variety of ways.

Summoner Wizard

Terrifying creatures obey your call, and you order them to aid you and to fight for you. In addition to binding these monsters, you are skilled at conjuring objects made of magical energy to impede or harm your foes. You must use your own actions to control your summoned monsters, so your role in combat is quite different from that of other wizards.

As with other wizards, a high Intelligence score is crucial to attack rolls and damage rolls. Your summoned creatures' hit points depend on your own, and many conjuration spells deal additional damage or have improved effects that depend on Constitution, so make that your second-highest score. Use the Tome of Binding form of Arcane Implement Mastery, since it improves your summoning spells. Select daily powers that have the summoning keyword, and encounter and at-will powers that have the conjuration keyword.

Suggested Class Feature: Tome of Binding
Suggested Feat: Careful Summoner*
Suggested Skills: Arcana, Dungeoneering, Insight, Nature
Suggested At-Will Powers: *scorching burst, storm pillar**
Suggested Encounter Power: *astral wasp**
Suggested Daily Power: *summon fire warrior**
*New option presented in this book

Summon Fire Warrior **Wizard Attack 1**

A soldier of flame strides through a planar veil. It lifts a shimmering axe above its head as it moves to attack.
Daily ✦ Arcane, Fire, Implement, Summoning
Minor Action
Ranged 10

Effect: You summon a Medium fire warrior in an unoccupied square within range. The fire warrior has a speed of fly 6 (hover). It has a +2 bonus to AC and a +2 bonus to Fortitude. You can give the fire warrior the following special commands.

Standard Action: Melee 1; targets one creature; Intelligence vs. Reflex; 1d8 + Intelligence modifier fire damage.

Opportunity Attack: Melee 1; targets one creature; Intelligence vs. Reflex; 1d8 + Intelligence modifier fire damage.

SUMMONED CREATURE

A creature you summon uses these rules, unless a power description says otherwise.

Allied Creature: When you use a summoning power, you create a creature that is an ally to you and your allies. The power determines where the summoned creature appears.

Your Defenses: The summoned creature's defenses equal yours when you summon it, not including any temporary bonuses or penalties to your statistics.

Hit Points: The summoned creature's maximum hit points equal your bloodied value. When the summoned creature drops to 0 hit points, it is destroyed, and you lose a healing surge. If you have no healing surges left, you instead take damage equal to half your bloodied value.

No Healing Surges: The summoned creature lacks healing surges, but if a power allows it to spend a healing surge, you can spend a healing surge for it. The summoned creature then gains the benefit of the healing surge, instead of your gaining it.

Speed: The summoning power determines the summoned creature's speed.

Commanding the Creature: The summoned creature has no actions of its own; you spend actions to command it mentally. You can command the creature only if you have line of effect to it. When you command the creature, the two of you share knowledge but not senses. As a minor action, you can command the summoned creature to take one of the following actions, if it is physically capable of taking that action: crawl, escape, fly, open or close a door or a container, pick up or drop an item, run, stand up, shift, squeeze, or walk. The summoning power determines any special commands you can give the summoned creature and gives an action type for each command. If a special command is a minor action, you can give that command only once during each of your turns.

Attacks and Checks: If a summoning power allows the summoned creature to attack, you make an attack through the creature, as specified in the power description. If the summoned creature can make a skill check or an ability check, you make the check. Attacks and checks you make through the creature do not include temporary bonuses or penalties to your statistics.

Duration: Unless the summoning power states otherwise, the summoned creature lasts until the end of the encounter and then disappears. As a minor action, you can dismiss the summoned creature.

Summon Shadow Serpent Wizard Utility 2

Shadows flicker at your feet, swirl before you, and coalesce into the form of a black serpent.
Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Summoning
Minor Action
Ranged 10
Effect: You summon a Small shadow serpent in an unoccupied square within range. The shadow serpent has a speed of 6. It has a +5 bonus to Stealth checks and takes no penalty to Stealth checks for moving more than 2 squares. You can give the shadow serpent the following special command.

Minor Action: Until the end of your turn, you can see through the shadow serpent's eyes. You cannot gain line of sight or line of effect for your powers from the serpent's square, but you can make Perception checks from it to spot hidden objects or creatures.

Summon Abyssal Maw Wizard Attack 5

The air is filled with the sound of gnashing teeth as a voracious creature of the Elemental Chaos appears and chews into anything it can reach.
Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Summoning
Minor Action
Ranged 10
Effect: You summon a Medium abyssal maw in an unoccupied square within range. The maw has a speed of 6. You can give the maw the following special commands.

Standard Action: Melee 1; targets one creature; Intelligence vs. Reflex; 2d6 + Intelligence modifier damage.

Opportunity Attack: Melee 1; targets one creature; Intelligence vs. Reflex; 1d8 + Intelligence modifier damage. In addition, if an enemy adjacent to the maw makes a melee attack that does not include the maw as a target, the maw can make an opportunity attack against that enemy after the enemy's attack is resolved.

Summon Iron Cohort — Wizard Utility 6

A dwarf-sized humanoid creature of earth and iron ore appears near you. When you come under attack, it steps in to absorb the force of the blow.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Summoning
Minor Action
Close burst 2

Effect: You summon a Small iron cohort in an unoccupied square within the burst. The iron cohort has a speed of 6 and has a +2 bonus to AC. You can give the iron cohort the following special command.

Immediate Interrupt: When you are targeted by a ranged or melee attack and the iron cohort is adjacent to you, the iron cohort becomes the attack's target instead.

Summon Arrowhawk — Wizard Attack 9

With a mighty shriek, a four-winged creature of the Elemental Chaos appears above your foes and swoops in to attack.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Summoning
Minor Action
Ranged 10

Effect: You summon a Medium arrowhawk in an unoccupied square within range. The arrowhawk has a speed of fly 8 (hover). It has a +2 bonus to AC and a +2 bonus to Reflex. You can give the arrowhawk the following special commands.

Standard Action: Shift 3 squares and attack; melee 1; targets one creature; Intelligence vs. Reflex; 1d10 + Intelligence modifier damage, and the target is marked by the arrowhawk until the end of your next turn.

Opportunity Attack: Melee 1; targets one creature; Intelligence vs. Reflex; 1d10 + Intelligence modifier damage, and the target is marked by the arrowhawk until the end of your next turn.

Summon Hammerfist Crusher — Wizard Utility 10

A hulking creature of rock appears before you. It strikes too slowly to possibly hit a living creature, but its mighty fists turn walls and doors into rubble.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Summoning
Minor Action
Ranged 10

Effect: You summon a Medium hammerfist crusher in an unoccupied square within range. The hammerfist crusher has a speed of 3. It has a +2 bonus to AC and a +2 bonus to Fortitude. You can give the crusher the following special command.

Standard Action: Melee 1; targets one object; Intelligence vs. Reflex; 5d6 + Intelligence modifier damage.

In Case You Don't Know Him

Bill Slavicsek's gaming life was forever changed when he discovered **Dungeons & Dragons** in 1976. He became a gaming professional in 1986 when he was hired by West End Games as an editor. He quickly added developer, designer, and creative manager to his resume, and his work helped shape the *Paranoia*, *Ghostbusters*, *Star Wars*, and *Torg* roleplaying games. He even found some time during that period to do freelance work for **D&D** 1st Edition. In 1993, Bill joined the staff of TSR, Inc. as a designer/editor. He worked on a bunch of 2nd Edition material, including products for **Core D&D**, *Dark Sun*, *Ravenloft*, and *Planescape*. In 1997, he was part of the TSR crowd that moved to Seattle to join Wizards of the Coast, and in that year he was promoted to R&D Director for **D&D**. In that position, Bill oversaw the creation of both the 3rd Edition and 4th Edition of the **D&D Roleplaying Game**. He was one of the driving forces behind the **D&D Insider** project, and he continues to oversee and lead the creative strategy and effort for **Dungeons & Dragons**.

Bill's enormous list of credits includes *Alternity*, *d20 Modern*, *d20 Star Wars*, *Pokemon Jr.*, *Eberron Campaign Setting*, the *D&D For Dummies* books, and his monthly *Ampersand (&)* column for *Dragon* Magazine.